

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES ETC. OF WESTERN LIFE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Application made for Second Class Entry at the N. Y. Post Office.

No. 203.

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 7, 1906.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S RELAY RACE; OR, THE FIGHT AT FORT FEATHER. *By AN OLD SCOUT.*



As Young Wild West saw the approaching cavalymen he swung his hat in the air and shouted:
"Fort Feather is besieged by the redskins! I am riding the finish of
a relay race to save the garrison. Come on!"

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S RELAY RACE

OR,

The Fight at Fort Feather

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

ATTACKED BY REDSKINS.

Sunset on the banks of the Green River, in Utah.

A party consisting of thirty men, women and children have just come to a halt and are arranging to camp for the night.

All day long they had been riding over a sandy desert, when at last the aspect of the country changed, and instead of banks of sand and groups of dull, gray rocks, the green verdure that grew along the river was before them.

Old Dave Burlew, the experienced guide, had contracted to lead a party from Denver to Richfield, Utah, where they proposed to settle down.

There were but eight men in the party, besides the guide. They had sold their property in Kansas, and with their wives and children had come to Denver by rail.

Then the services of the guide had come in play, and as our story opens we find them a little over half-way to their destination.

Wagons drawn by mule teams carried the belongings of the emigrants, the women and children riding in them.

The men had provided themselves with horses, and they rode along with the old guide.

So far the journey had been an uninterrupted one, but Dave Burlew had shown signs of being a little bit worried when they first struck the green grass and beheld the shining, crooked stream in the distance.

While the women were preparing the evening meal he took his trusty rifle and started down the river bank.

"I'm goin' ter try an' shoot some game afore dark," he explained to the men of the party as he went away.

But that was not what he intended to do.

Old Dave had seen Indian signs, and he was afraid that the Utes had broken out and started a war on the whites again.

In the past two years they had done it three or four times, and each time there had been a slaughter of men, women and children before the red fiends could be subdued.

At the time of which we write Uncle Sam did not have the Indians under such good control as he has now.

Though there were forts scattered all over the Wild West, and the redskins were on reservations, every now and then some of them would take a notion to go back to the barbarious life they had been accustomed to lead, and then dreadful things would happen.

Dave Burlew had heard from several old settlers along the line of march that the Utes on the reservation had been reported as being restless, and that at Fort Feather the few cavalymen stationed there were getting uneasy.

They feared there would be an Indian uprising, and then there would be serious trouble, since the regulars were stationed so far apart in the Green River region.

The old guide had barely got out of sight of the camp around a little bunch of cottonwoods when he saw a thin column of smoke rising from a hill about two miles distant.

"I knowed it!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "Ther Utes have broke loose, an' there's goin' ter be trouble, as sure's my name are Dave Burlew. It's what I calls too bad, too. These men I've got with me don't know nothin' about fightin' Injuns, an' there's ther wimmen an' chil-

dren. It'll go hard with them, I reckon, if ther red galoots tackle us. Well, there's only one thing ter do, an' that is ter tell 'em, so we kin git ready. That smoke means somethin'!"

Then he took a look all around as far as his range of vision extended.

He was not surprised to see another thin column of smoke rise up from a point some three or four miles to the right of the first one.

"That's ther answer," the old man muttered. "Ther redskins what sent up ther first smoke know we're here, an' they have let ther others know about it. We've got ter git ready fur an attack. I wonder if there's many soldiers at Fort Feather now. Ther fort is only thirty miles from here, an' that makes it look as though there ain't, 'cause ther redskins wouldn't be slingin' out their signs like this if they was afraid of bein' tackled by ther cavalry from ther fort. It are most likely that there ain't more'n a dozen men at ther fort this very minute, an' that ther Injuns knows it."

Having come to this conclusion, the guide walked slowly back to the camp.

Alfred Graves was the recognized leader of the expedition, and he came out to meet him.

"You seem to be troubled over something, Dave," he said. "What is it? There isn't danger brewing, is there?"

"There is, Al," was the reply. "I might as well tell yer that."

"What is the danger?" and the face of Graves turned slightly pale.

"Injuns."

"What! Why, I thought the redskins were at peace with the whites, and were living contentedly on the reservations allotted to them."

"Well, I reckon some of 'em has broke out on ther war-path. I've heard some talk of it ther last week or two, but I've seen enough in ther last half hour ter make me believe that it's true. There's Injuns close by, an' they know we're here, too."

"Do you think they would really be bad enough to attack us?"

"If they've started on ther war-path they'll jest like ther chance of doin' it, Al."

Graves looked worried.

"Well, I suppose we will have to do the best we can," he said.

"That's right. It might be that they won't interfere with us. But we'd better git ready, ter make sure of it."

"That's right. We will tell the rest and let them be prepared for the worst."

Graves told them himself, and, as might be supposed, there was much fear shown, especially by the women and children.

The pretty dark-eyed daughter of Graves, whose name was Agnes, put on a hopeful look, though, and she quickly said:

"I am very glad that I have learned how to shoot with a rifle on the way, father. I can be of some use if the Indians attack us. I can hit a bull's-eye at a hundred yards, so I guess I would be able to shoot a redskin if I saw him riding down upon us for the purpose of slaying us."

The male members of the party nodded their approval. It made them feel all the more determined to protect themselves and their families.

Not one of the travelers had dreamed of such a thing as being attacked by hostile Indians.

They had been on the lookout for roving bands of bad white men, for they were always to be feared in that wild part of the country.

But they were not to be compared with hostile Indians, so they thought.

Really, though, in many cases, they were much worse, as the flotsam and jetsum of the worst of mankind were to be found there—men who had prices upon their heads and who dared not show themselves in the cities and towns on account of the crimes they had committed.

Preparations were made to secure themselves against the redskins should any come, and the men went about it with a dogged determination, the women helping, as a matter of course.

Agnes Graves was the most cheerful of any in the party.

"Keep cool," she kept saying to the women, and after a while she had them in pretty good spirits.

But none of them ate as heartily at supper as they would have done if they had not become acquainted with the fact that there were hostile Indians about.

The sun had gone down and darkness was beginning to gather.

The thin columns of smoke had died out and all was silence, save for the occasional bark of a coyote.

The covered wagons had been drawn in a semi-circle to the face of the cliff that reared itself a few yards from the bank of the river.

The men busied themselves cleaning and loading the firearms they possessed.

All had rifles, for they had considered it a necessity to possess themselves of such weapons before they set out from Denver to continue the journey through the wilderness.

Gradually the darkness gathered and the stars came out one by one.

Old Dave Burlew was outside the circle assisting half a dozen of the men roll up big stones under the wagons, so the women and children would have places to crouch behind when the fight began—if there was a fight.

All hoped there would not be, of course, but, by the way the guide acted, it seemed almost a certainty.

An hour passed.

The party of travelers were restless from the strain of the thing.

"I reckon I'll take a little scout around an' see if there is any of ther redskins around," he said in a low tone. "I

want everybody ter keep quiet an' lay low. We ain't got no fire ter show 'em jest where we are, an' it may be that they won't strike us."

But what he said last was merely to cheer them up.

The Indian signs he had seen were enough to convince him that there was bound to be a visit from the redskins, providing there was any big number of them about.

If there were no more than a dozen of them they would be safe from an attack, for the redskins had had so much experience in fighting the palefaces that they knew it required at least two to one to perfect a slaughter.

Dave Burlew kept close to the ground as he stole away from the camp.

He was experienced in that line, and he was acting just as though he was certain that there were Indians about.

He went up the river for a hundred yards and then turned and went down.

Then he cast his eyes over the rippling surface of Green River and strove to look across.

The old man could just see the dark outlines of the bank on the opposite side, and as he looked he suddenly noticed something push out and start across the stream.

"A canoe, by jingo!" he muttered.

He waited for over a minute and then he could see that the canoe had half a dozen forms in it.

"That's all from that side of ther river, I reckon," he muttered. "Well, ther second column of smoke was on this side, so that's where ther most of 'em will come from. I'll jest git back ter ther camp, fur ther chances is that ther rest of 'em is close by now."

He had scarcely made a move to start when the hoot of an owl sounded near him.

Burlew dropped close to the ground and remained perfectly still.

While it was almost the exact cry of an owl, he knew that it was not one of the birds that had uttered it.

That it came from a nearby redskin, and was meant as a signal, he was certain.

Just then the hoot was answered from the river.

The old guide now began creeping cautiously for the camp.

He knew he had no time to spare.

Fortunately the hiding Indians were not near enough to observe him as he moved along through the darkness, and he soon got inside the barricade that had been formed.

"Git your guns ready an' lay low!" he whispered. "Ther redskins is comin'!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when another hoot rang out, and then the answer came.

"Do yer hear that?" the old man whispered, hoarsely.

"Yes," answered Alfred Graves; "it is an owl, isn't it?"

"Not much! It's redskins. Everybody git ready!"

The women and children were hastily placed behind the rocks, and then the male members of the party knelt with their rifles through the openings between the wagons.

Five minutes passed in silence.

To the waiting men it was almost torture.

Not one of them, with the exception of the guide, had ever experienced Indian fighting, and they knew not what to do.

The keen eyes of the old man soon discovered dark forms creeping along the river bank, and then he knew that those in the canoe had landed, and were joining the gang on that side.

It would only be the question of a few minutes before the attack would be made now, and he knew it.

Five minutes more passed.

Then, with a suddenness that was startling in the fullest sense, a yell sounded.

At least a score of throats gave utterance to it and it caused the waiting travelers to thrill with fear.

"Fire when I say ther word," said Burlew; "but don't shoot too high, 'cause we can't afford ter waste any shots. If we kin mow down half a dozen of 'em right at ther start we'll have 'em, I think!"

The next instant a score of dark forms were seen leaping toward the wagons.

"Fire!" shouted Dave Burlew.

Then ten rifles belched forth streaks of fire, for Agnes Graves was ready when the word was given, and she did not hesitate to shoot.

The Indians paused and dropped low to the ground, for the reception they got was a little more than they expected, evidently.

It was impossible for the besieged party to tell how many had been hit, but old Dave Burlew knew the volley had been disastrous to them.

Three of the men owned repeating rifles, and they kept on firing.

But the old man quickly stopped them.

"What are yer shootin' at?" he cried. "Don't waste your bullets. Don't pull a trigger unless yer kin see what you're shootin' at."

The first rush of the red demons had been checked, but that was only temporary.

They had become strangely silent right after the volley had been fired, and for a couple of minutes they remained that way.

Then the fierce warwhoop sounded again and they came with a rush, firing as they did so.

This was the first shooting they had done, and they sent the bullets through the wagon covers with a vengeance.

But the precautions the travelers had taken saved them from being hit.

"Give it ter 'em!" shouted Burlew. "Aim straight, men!"

Crack—crack—cra—ang!

Another volley was fired, and the guide saw at least four of the attacking party go down.

But the others came right on, and a second later they were climbing over the wagons.

"Give it ter 'em!" cried the guide, firing his revolver right in the face of a brave who was in the act of leaping down into the inclosure.

Then it was that a desperate battle was begun.

But it was bound to result in defeat for the brave band of whites, unless something happened.

Something did happen, for just then a shout sounded from the trail back from the river bank, and during the brief intervals between the shots the sounds of galloping hoofs could be heard.

Crack—crack—crack!

Three shots rang out from the rear of the redskin band and then they turned and fled in wild disorder.

"Whoopee!" shouted a voice. "Young Wild West an' his pards is in time, I reckon. Put it inter ther sneakin' red galoots!"

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND HIS PARTNERS.

The cracking of revolvers now made such a noise that the party of travelers could not hear anything further.

But they knew that help had come, and that was sufficient to make them join in giving a cheer.

The redskins were no longer close enough to be seen, so the horsemen who had come to the rescue dismounted.

"Strike a light, friends," said a clear voice that showed how cool the speaker was. "There is no danger of that gang bothering you right away again, I guess."

"Right yer are, pard!" exclaimed Dave Burlew, and he hurriedly lighted a lantern.

Then the thankful band of travelers saw that there were only three in the party that had come to the rescue.

Two of them were nothing more than boys, though they were of medium height and build, and the other was a tall man, still young in years.

"Thunder!" cried old Dave Burlew, as he held the lantern so the light could shine on the newcomers; "it's Young Wild West an' his pards, sure enough! I knowed it was ther voice of Cheyenne Charlie what yelled out that Young Wild West an' his pards was comin'. Howsumever, there wasn't nothin' sure about it, so I didn't say anything. Now I kin see with my own eyes."

"Hello, Dave!" answered one of the boys, as he stepped forward and shook the old man's hand.

Though but a boy in years, he looked every inch a man, as far as strength and agility went.

Handsome as an Apollo, with a wealth of long chestnut hair hanging over his shoulders, he made a picture of the true young Westerner.

He was attired in a neat-fitting hunting suit of buckskin that was elaborately trimmed with scarlet silk fringe, which set off his graceful, athletic form to the best advantage.

In his hand was the revolver that had dealt out several shots to the hostile Utes, and swung over his shoulder was a Winchester rifle, which was a dangerous weapon in his

hands, for Young Wild West was the recognized Champion Deadshot of the Wild West.

He was also known as the Prince of the Saddle, owing to the fact that his equal had never been found at taming and riding a wild horse of the prairies.

The other boy, Jim Dart, who, like Young Wild West, had been born and reared on the border, was a good-looking young fellow, strong and active, and he, too, wore a fancy buckskin hunting suit.

The third in the little party was Cheyenne Charlie, the well-known scout and Indian fighter. He was a trifle over six feet in height and was supple and straight as an arrow.

His face was bronzed from the sun and winds of the mountains and plains, and his long black hair and drooping mustache added a look to him that would have given the casual observer the impression that he was a dangerous man to fool with.

And so he was, too. Being rather hot-headed and afraid of nothing, he was apt to get into trouble almost any time.

That was why he relied upon Young Wild West as a leader.

X The dashing young deadshot was cool and cautious under all conditions. He never lost his head, and his judgment was second to none.

The dashing young deadshot, in company with his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, had experienced more startling adventures and had been through more hairbreadth escapes than usually falls to the lot of men.

The three often gave the government valuable service in the capacity of scouts, and they were now on their way to Fort Feather, whither they had been summoned to help put down an uprising of the Utes.

They had left the wife of Cheyenne Charlie and the two sweethearts of the boys at Silver Plume, in the charge of friends, and had started out to assist all they could in the work of subduing the treacherous Indians.

As we have already stated, the troopers in that part of Utah were pretty well scattered around, and the fact that the rebellious Utes had established a headquarters less than thirty miles from Fort Feather, on the Green River, made it appear as though they cared nothing for the fort, and in all probability meant to attack it and take charge.

Word had been received by Young Wild West two days before the opening of our story, and they had been riding hard ever since they set out for the fort.

It was lucky for old Dave Burlew and the party he was guiding across the desert and plains that they happened along just as they did.

Fort Feather was forty miles away from the spot where the travelers were camped, and as Young Wild West and his partners had been riding hard all day they decided to stop there till morning.

They were not long in being introduced to the party of travelers and then they made themselves at home, so to speak.

A fire was started and the women made coffee for them, and while this was going on the three gave their tired horses a good rubbing down.

Young Wild West had the fastest and most intelligent steed known in the whole West.

It was a sorrel stallion and bore the name of Spitfire, which the dashing young Prince of the Saddle had given him while breaking him from a wild horse of the prairies.

The dashing boy valued the stallion highly, and though he had been offered big sums of money for him, he had never once thought of parting with Spitfire.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart both owned the best money could buy in the line of horseflesh, and the three were able to keep out of the way of the fastest Indian ponies on the plains and mountains.

And when they started to ride down a bad Indian or a villainous white renegade they generally succeeded.

Old Dave Burlew had taken a scout around as soon as he was gone greeting the three dashing scouts, and he came back with the report that there were seven dead redskins lying close to the camp and that the living ones had crossed the river.

The survivors of those who came across in the canoe had gone back in the same way they came and the others had made their horses swim across.

"I guess they won't bother us again to-night," said Young Wild West, when he had heard the report of the guide. "There are not enough of them for that. If they do come I'll guarantee that there won't be many left of them when we get through with them."

"I reckon there won't be, not if you an' your pards draws beads on 'em," retorted Burlew, nodding at the dashing boy in admiration. "I knows all about you fellows, Young Wild West. When you git after Injuns, or any other kind of game it's good-by to 'em, an' no mistake!"

"Well, I don't know as we are any better than anyone else in that line," the young deadshot said, with a laugh. "We always do our best when we start to do a thing, though."

The travelers felt secure, now that the three had arrived.

During the brief fight with the redskins only one man had been wounded, and that was so slight that he would be all right again in a few days.

A good watch was kept during the night, but the redskins failed to show up again, and when morning dawned Young Wild West advised the guide to set out for Fort Feather without any loss of time.

"If you attempt to keep on the trail you will surely get caught by the Utes," he added. "It will only make a delay of a few days, at the most, for as soon as we get the troopers together the uprising will be put down in short order. I think you can do no better than to go to the fort."

"That is jest what I think," Burlew replied. "I was goin' ter do that if the Injuns had not bothered us last

night, even. I don't want ter run no risk with ther wimmen an' children I've got in charge."

Then he told the members of the party what the young deadshot said, and they were unanimous in deciding to take the advice of Young Wild West.

While the women were getting the breakfast ready, Young Wild West mounted his sorrel stallion, Spitfire, and went out to reconnoiter.

He rode down the river bank for a mile, keeping a watch on the hills at the other side, and then he suddenly saw smoke arising from behind a clump of rocks half a mile away.

The boy gave a nod of satisfaction.

"So there is where you are, eh?" he muttered. "Getting your breakfast, I suppose. Well, I suppose you are anxious for us to get away, so you can come over this side and bury your dead."

As the young deadshot turned his horse to ride back a puff of smoke suddenly came from a tree top near the place where he had located the Indian camp.

He gave the sorrel a quick tap and the animal leaped forward just as a report sounded.

Wild heard the hum of a bullet as it went past the back of his head.

"Whoa, Spitfire!" he cried.

Then, as the sorrel came to an abrupt halt, his rifle flew to his shoulder.

There was an Indian hidden in the top of that tree, and, though the dashing young deadshot could not see his outlines, he could see a small part of the foliage moving.

It could not be caused by a breeze, for there was hardly a breath of air stirring just then.

Taking a quick aim at the moving foliage in the tree that was fully half a mile away, he pressed the trigger.

Cra-ang!

The sharp report rang out clear and distinct on the still morning air.

Then, one after another, the lower limbs of the tree bent and swayed, and finally Wild caught sight of a descending body.

"I guess that fellow won't ever fire another shot from the top of a tree," he thought. "He was a pretty good shot, for if Spitfire had not jumped forward just as he did, I would have got that bullet."

The young deadshot rode back to the camp at a canter, just as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

"I reckon yer must have picked off one of ther redskins, Wild?" remarked Cheyenne Charlie, questioningly, as he rode in and brought his horse to a halt.

"Yes," was the reply; "one of them fired at me from the top of a tree on the other side of the river, and I then fired and brought him down. That makes one less to bother the whites, I guess."

The travelers looked at the dashing boy admiringly.

He was so cool, and had such an easy-going way about him, that he was bound to attract more than ordinary attention.

He told them just where the camp of the Utes was located, and then he sat down to the breakfast that was now ready.

Though our three friends were in a hurry to get to Fort Feather, they deemed it advisable to stay with the wagon train and escort it there.

There was no telling how soon the redskins might make another attack on it, and it might be that they would have reinforcements soon.

That would make it bad for Dave Burlew and his party.

The mules were hitched to the wagons as soon as possible, and then those who rode horses mounted, and the outfit started off.

They were compelled to go three miles up the river before they found a place where it could be forded, and even then it took half an hour to get the wagons across.

Then they headed straight for the fort.

They saw no more of the Indians until about two hours before sunset.

Then they saw a small party following them about two miles in the rear.

The women became much alarmed as soon as they were aware of it, but Young Wild West assured them that there was no danger from that small crowd.

"There are only seven or eight of them," he said. "They won't attack us unless they meet more redskins to help them out. We will get to the fort in less than two hours now. I don't like the way those fellows are acting, though. They are coming up pretty close to the fort for hostile Indians, I think. The chances are that there are plenty more of them about."

"Oh, if we can only get to the fort!" said one of the women.

"We will get there all right," answered Agnes Graves, the pretty daughter of the head of the emigrating band.

"Yes," nodded Wild. "And I guess it won't hurt to make the mules jog along a bit, as they can have a good rest when we get there. The quicker we reach the fort the better, I think."

They kept on as fast as the mules could be made to travel, and as the minutes flitted by the pursuing redskins gradually fell back.

At length the fort came in sight.

It was really nothing more than a block house built on a little hill, with a stockade running around it.

On the north side of the stockade were a store and half a dozen cabins occupied by settlers.

It was not much of a place, but the travelers thought that once they got there they would be safe from the hostile Utes.

But they little dreamed of what was brewing.

The building that was called the fort had been built years before, and it had withstood more than one attack from the Indians.

But in a few short hours it was destined to have the hottest time of its existence.

CHAPTER III.

WILD FALLS INTO THE HANDS OF THE UTES.

As Young Wild West rode up to Fort Feather at the head of the party he was recognized by the officer in charge.

A cheer went up from a dozen throats, and then the settlers and their families came out of the cabins to see what it meant.

It was just about the time that the people of the quiet little post were eating the evening meal, and that was why our friends got there before they were observed by any but those on guard at the block house.

Lieutenant Ainsworth was in command just then, since even the general was away on a vacation.

He had been left at the fort with only fourteen cavalrymen.

The captain had taken the rest of the troop to scour the country to find out what the Utes were up to.

Young Wild West looked grave when he heard this.

"How long have the cavalrymen have gone?" he asked.

"They left early yesterday morning," was the reply.

"When were they to come back?"

"There was no specified time, I believe. You see, in the absence of the post commander and the colonel, Captain Darius has full charge, and he left me in charge while he went out with the men to pick up what information he can. If he thinks there is any danger of the Utes getting together in a large force a messenger will be sent to Fort Griffin, which is just ninety miles from here. The colonel is there, and he has four hundred men with him. There is where he figured that the seat of war would be, in case the Utes did rise and try to do something."

"Well, I think he made a mistake in thinking that way," Young Wild West answered. "I have seen just enough to convince me that Fort Feather is the place that will bear the brunt of it. You must know that the Utes are foxy redskins. It is more than probable that they know just how many men you have here. I did not tell you that a small party of them attacked the camp of the people I brought here last night, but I'll let you know all about it now."

Then the dashing young deadshot related all that had occurred, and Lieutenant Ainsworth showed much concern.

The lieutenant was well acquainted with Young Wild West and his partners and he had the utmost faith in them.

"And I have only fourteen men here," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "A couple of hundred armed Utes could take the block house, I suppose."

"Well, they would burn the cabins of the settlers and create a general havoc if they did not quite succeed in capturing the fort."

Then the two had a long, earnest talk.

The result was that at the first sign of a concentration of the Indians in the vicinity of the fort Young Wild West was to start on a wild ride to Fort Griffin for help.

There was a settlement called Creekville, thirty miles from the fort, and right on the way, and thirty miles farther on was another that was named Blackbird.

That left but thirty more to Fort Griffin.

Horses could he had at either of the settlements, of course, so if it came to a case of real hurry Young Wild West meant to make a relay race of it to Fort Griffin.

But he was in hopes that the redskins would not gather in large numbers, and in that case there would be no attack.

Darkness soon shut off all view of the surrounding country.

In about an hour Young Wild West and his partners went out and started to make a circuit of the fort about two miles out.

They had not gone more than three or four miles around when they saw a blazing fire off to the left at the top of a hill.

"That's an Injun signal, as sure as guns!" declared Cheyenne Charlie.

"That's right," nodded our hero.

Then their eyes suddenly caught sight of another fire about five miles distant.

It was only there for the space of a minute, for the Indians, who made it must have extinguished it right away.

"That's an answer to ther first one," remarked the scout. "I reckon ther red galoots mean ther fort all right, Wild."

"That's right, Charlie. But just wait. I guess we had better go and see how many they number before we go back."

"Sure!" spoke up Jim.

They now started to ride in the direction of the first fire, which was still burning, though it was gradually dying out.

"That means that all the Indians within sight of that fire will congregate there before morning," said Wild. "I guess we will have to stay out a while, in order to get a good report to take to the fort, boys."

"That's right, Wild," answered Charlie.

The distance to the signal fire was probably four miles, as near as they could judge, and they rode forward at a gallop.

Of course they did not mean to keep up such a swift pace when they got close to it, for that would have made known their presence to the Utes.

The fire kept gradually going down, but they were within a mile of it before it went out altogether.

There was a clump of thickly wooded hills right ahead now, and it was in these that the signal fire had been lighted.

They allowed their horses to walk, and as there was

plenty of short, thick grass there, the sounds of the hoofs could scarcely be heard.

In a very few minutes they were in the timber and ascending an uneven slope.

They were getting dangerously close to the Indians now, and they knew it.

"The scoundrels certainly know that there are very few soldiers at the fort, or they would never make their headquarters so near it," Young Wild West observed. "I guess we had better dismount now, and I will go ahead on foot. You fellows can stay here with the horses."

"All right, Wild," answered Dart, who was ever ready to abide by what the young deadshot said.

"You want ter be mighty careful, Wild," the scout said, as our hero dismounted. "It are more'n likely that ther red galoots has got scouts out. If a couple of 'em should catch yer nappin' jest fire a shot, whether you've got time ter draw bead on 'em or not."

"All right, Charlie; that is just what I'll do. One shot will mean that I am caught. If you hear any more than that you will know that I am putting up a fight."

With that, the dashing young deadshot started off through the darkness of the woods.

Wild had not got more than fifty yards from his two partners when he heard the low murmur of voices.

He gave a nod of satisfaction, and then, after a slight pause, continued on his way.

He was using all the caution he possessed now, for he knew he was right near the camp of the Utes.

He made his way through the undergrowth without making a sound and gradually neared the parties who were conversing in low guttural tones.

Not until he was within twenty feet of the spot where the sounds came from did he pause.

Then he became aware of the fact that two Indians were conversing in their own language.

They were talking very low, too, and he could not understand what they were saying.

Young Wild West spoke and understood the language of the Sioux tribe very well, but he could not make out what the two were talking about.

But it was easy for him to guess that they were a couple of the braves who had been sent out to ascertain if there were any palefaces around.

The two braves had evidently met just as Wild came within hearing, for they now separated and moved off in different directions.

Wild waited until they had gone and then he crept forward again.

A hundred yards he covered, and then, as he came to the top of a little rise, he saw the light of a campfire not far away.

"I guess I am getting close to them now," he thought. "I am inside their lines, anyhow, and it won't be much trouble to find just how many there are of them here."

As he got a few steps nearer he saw that there were more than one fire burning.

There were as many as half a dozen.

It was a gully that the redskins were located in, just low enough to prevent the light made by their fires from being seen very far distant.

This showed that the signal fire had been burning on an elevation nearby.

The trees happened to be very close together on either side of the gully, and this enabled the boy to get close as was necessary to suit his purpose.

Two minutes later and he was at a point where he could look almost straight up the gully, which was about a hundred feet wide right there.

It narrowed down at both ends, at a distance of probably two hundred yards apart.

"What a fine place to trap them, if I only had about fifty determined fighters at my back," thought Wild, for he could see that there were not more than a hundred Ute warriors there.

But that was not all that would be there, for the signal fire had been answered, and it was quite likely that a hundred more—if not a larger number—were on their way there and pretty close to the camp.

Wild placed his hand on a small tree that leaned over and and peered over to get a good view of the redskins below him.

The foliage of the tree hung close to the ground and shielded him from sight, even if the Indians had been looking that way.

When the dashing young deadshot saw that nearly all the Utes were armed with rifles he felt a bit uneasy.

"They mean to attack the fort, as sure as I am looking at them with my two eyes!" he muttered under his breath. "Well, I guess I will go back, for I have seen enough to make it quite plain that the situation is a desperate one.

In getting back to an upright position he gave a little extra pressure on the tree.

There was an ominous cracking sound, and then before he could get straightened up, the tree gave way, and he was sent whirling heels-over-head into the gully.

It had happened in such an unexpected manner that Wild had been unable to catch himself, and before he could get upon his feet half a dozen of the surprised Utes were at the spot where he landed.

The boy managed to draw one of his six-shooters, however, and he pressed the trigger, regardless of where the bullet went.

Crack!

The report rang out, and then there was a fierce yell from the redskins and Young Wild West was seized and disarmed.

Many against one is bound to result in a quick victory for the many when it is at such close quarters.

The boy did his best to get away from them, but he had been unable to get upon his feet.

He was quickly bound, and then two of the braves roughly dragged him to the light of a fire.

The Utes were jubilant.

They easily understood that he was a spy from the fort, and the fact that they had captured him made them feel like indulging in a war dance.

But the chief quickly pushed his way to the front and warned them to keep quiet.

Wild was not known by any in that particular crowd, and he was glad of it, for the majority of the chiefs throughout the West had reason to hate him for the excellent work he had done against them at different times.

"Paleface boy heap much brave!" ventured the chief, sneeringly.

"That's all right," answered Wild, coolly, for he had recovered from the astonishment his luckless fall had given him almost immediately, and he was now in his regular cool and easy frame of mind.

"What paleface boy do here?" the Ute leader went on.

"I happened along this way and saw your campfires," was the reply. "I thought I would take a look at you, that's all."

"Paleface boy heap much lie! He come from Fort Feather."

"Is Fort Feather near here?" asked Wild, innocently.

"Paleface boy know where fort is."

"Are you on the war-path, chief?"

"Ugh!"

"If you are, why is it that you are so near the fort? The soldiers will shoot you down like grain before the scythe."

"Ugh!"

There was naught but scorn in the utterance.

Young Wild West realized that he was in a desperate predicament.

He could not make the chief believe he had happened along by accident, and he could get nothing from him as to what he was up to.

At an order from the chief he was bound to a tree near the center of the camp.

This had hardly been done when there was a shout close at hand, and the next minute fully two hundred warriors with their war paint on came riding up the gully.

There were now at least three hundred of the Utes, and if they attacked Fort Feather it could never last long against them.

CHAPTER IV.

WILD GETS READY TO RIDE HIS RELAY RACE.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were surprised when they heard the shot fired.

While they had had it understood that Wild was to fire a shot in case he got into trouble with the Indians, they hardly expected to hear it.

They thought he would succeed in his undertaking without being discovered.

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed the scout; "I reckon Wild's got inter trouble!"

Just then they heard the exultant cries of the redskins, and then they were sure that such a thing had happened.

"I don't know how they could have caught him," observed Jim Dart. "Something must have happened that was dead against him. Wild is always very careful."

The two waited for fully five minutes, and hearing nothing to indicate that Wild was coming back, they decided to try and find a way to get him from the redskins.

There was no doubt in their minds now but that he had been captured.

It was just then that they heard horses approaching.

There were many of them, as they could tell.

"More Injuns comin', I reckon," said the scout. "It'll be a good time now ter try an' git Wild away from 'em. If this is a new gang them what catched him will be putty much interested in 'em, an' that might give us a chance ter sneak in close an' cut him loose, fur yer kin bet they've got him tied, if they ain't killed him."

"Oh, they haven't killed him," answered Jim. "They wouldn't do that right away. They will want to find out what they can from him."

"Which will be nothin'," and the scout chuckled softly. "Wild ain't ther one ter give information ter his enemies that'll do 'em any good, yer know."

"Of course not. But if he can deceive them he will do it."

"Well, let's git over there an' find out jest what is ther matter."

"We will leave the horses right here."

"Yes."

The two now hurried in the direction Wild had taken.

They did not have to use so very much caution, since the noise made by the Utes in the camp drowned every-

But they did not know at what moment they might run into the arms of a Ute guard, so that made them keep a pretty sharp watch through the darkness.

The trees were so close together that they had to proceed by taking hold of them and moving along in that way.

By the time they got to the edge of the gully a general pow-wow was taking place in the camp.

It was quite evident that the redskins did not dream of such a thing as their captive having friends near, for they seemed to be making no effort to scour the vicinity in search of anybody.

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed the scout in a low whisper, "there's enough of ther measly coyotes there ter clean out ther fort, Jim."

"And that is just what they are getting ready to do, I'll bet," was Dart's reply.

"There ain't any doubt about that. Hello! There's Wild tied ter a tree!"

"That's right! They haven't done any more than make him a prisoner, Charlie. Now, let's figure a way to get

him out of the scrape he is in. The redskins are not paying the least attention to him. They are holding a pow-wow to decide what they are going to do, I suppose. I guess you'll be the one to sneak into the camp and cut Wild loose, Charlie."

"I reckon I kin do it if anyone kin," was the reply.

The scout took a good look around.

There were Indians on all sides of the captive boy but one.

The pow-wow was being held to the left of where he stood bound to the tree, and those who were not in the councils of the chiefs were gathered close to those who were, listening to what was being said.

The spot that was not guarded was on the side directly opposite and it was for this point that Charlie decided to make.

"You come part of ther way, Jim," he whispered. "I'm goin' ter cut him loose, an' then we'll run fur it. It'll be your business ter drop any of them what starts in ter stop us."

"All right. You can bet I'll do that."

Charlie now got ready for business.

He handed his rifle to Jim, for he did not want to be impeded by it, and then he tightened his belt a trifle.

The next minute he was moving around for the point he had picked out to make the approach to the rescue of Young Wild West.

Meanwhile the Utes were parleying at a great rate.

The chief of those who had been in the camp when Young Wild West fell into their hands was laying it down strongly to the chief of those who had just got there.

Charlie realized that he would never have a better chance than at that moment.

He hurried forward, keeping his eyes on the redskins nearest to Wild as he did so.

The trees and bushes afforded him a good opportunity, and he made the best of it. He drew his bowie knife when he was within a dozen feet of the prisoner, and then, keeping close to the ground, he moved slowly toward him.

There was no such thing as hurrying now, for on glimpse of him by a redskin would spoil the whole thing.

Jim was waiting less than thirty feet away.

He was right at the edge of a camp behind two trees that grew close together, and he could shoot straight sure, without the least difficulty from that point.

Charlie found that he could reach the tree that was bound to without having to show himself to the redskins.

"Just t. "I reckon Wild will soon be out of his diffees with muttered under his breath. "The red galootge is short, talkin' over their rascally plans ter notice y

here. But I ain't got no more time than ners were ent that."

Without any further delay, he crept Burlew was in the tree.

I will see you again One more look to make sure th keep the redskins off right, and he reached up with a relay race that I ride,

thongs that held the dashing young deadshot to the tree.

Young Wild West felt his bonds give, but he made no sign.

He had been expecting his partners to come to his rescue, for he knew they would not desert him.

"I'm here, Wild," the scout ventured to whisper.

"I know, Charlie," came the reply, while the boy kept his eyes on the group of Indians, just as he had been doing before he was aware that his partners were at hand. Zip!

Another slash with the keen-edged knife and the bonds that held his wrists behind him were severed.

But Young Wild West never moved.

He was waiting until he had the freedom of his feet.

Charlie lost no time in cutting the thongs that had been placed about Wild's ankles.

Then the dashing young deadshot was free.

Lying at the foot of a tree a few feet from him were his revolvers and knife, and leaning against it was the rifle that had been swung over his shoulder when he was captured.

Charlie saw them, and he promptly crawled around to the back of the tree.

The next minute he had the weapons in his possession.

"Now, then, I reckon we'll git away from here, Wild," he whispered.

"All right," was the calm rejoinder; "lead the way."

Then Wild stepped around the tree.

Dropping to the ground, he crept through the bushes after the scout.

The two got to where Jim was waiting for them before the redskins became aware that their prisoner was not tied to the tree.

The brave that discovered it let out a warning cry and then the council broke up and there was a rush for the tree.

The severed bonds told the tale only too well.

"Run for it, boys!" said Young Wild West, and then up the side of gully they went.

The savages caught a glimpse of their forms and saw the swaying bushes.

Then, yelling like so many wild demons, they started in pursuit.

Our hero and his partners knew just where the traps were, and without uttering a sound, they made for ever, a

bullet knew they could get through the thick woods as

Crack! the redskins could, and that meant that they would

The rep horses in time to mount them and get away. from the reuing Utes fired a volley, but the bullets all disarmed. the mark.

Many agains our friends made in getting through the for the many wls drowned by that of the pursuers.

The boy did his ing to turn and let a few shots go at been unable to get ped him.

He was quickly be "They will only know the exact roughly dragged him to fire. Come on!"

The Utes were jubilant.

It was very dark, but Wild knew just about where the horses were.

He gave a low whistle and instantly a whinny was heard.

It came from his faithful steed, Spitfire.

The stallion knew the boy's whistle as much as he knew anything.

Wild made straight for the spot the whinny came from, followed by Charlie and Jim.

They reached the horses, and, mounting them, rode down the hill for the open prairie.

Then it was that a shout of defiance left the lips of the scout.

He could no longer restrain himself.

"Whoopee! Whoopee! Come on, you red galoots!" he cried. "I reckon we'll give yer all yer want!"

But the redskins were no longer pursuing them on foot.

The moment they heard the clatter of hoofs they started back to the camp for horses.

But Young Wild West and his partners had a good half-mile start of them, and there was no possibility of their being caught now.

They rode straight back to the fort and reported.

When Lieutenant Ainsworth heard that there were three hundred of the Utes camped so near he was much disturbed.

"I am of the opinion that they will attack us before daylight," he said.

"That will be just about the time they will do it," our hero answered.

"Then you must ride for help."

"I will do that gladly, and if anyone can get help I will."

"Ninety miles is a long distance, though."

"I know it is, but I will change horses at Creeksville, and when I get to Blackbird I will change again, as I said. All I want to make sure of is that my horse is well cared care of, and ready for me when I come back. You ought to hold the redskins off for twelve hours, at least. You have plenty of ammunition, and I'll guarantee you that every time Charlie and Jim pull a trigger a redskin will go down. They never waste any shots."

"Yes, we can hold them off for twelve hours, I think," said the lieutenant, slowly. "But you will have to perform a miracle to ride to Fort Griffin and back in twelve hours. Why, the distance there and back is a hundred and eighty miles."

"Yes, but that is only fifteen miles an hour. I will have a fresh horse every thirty miles, you know. I know my own horse can beat that all hollow, but I wouldn't want to shove him to his utmost any further than thirty miles. I want him fresh when I get back to Creeksville."

"But you won't have the cavalry with you, for they couldn't make any more than ten miles an hour, and they couldn't keep that up for five hours."

"Well, I want to get back and see how things are, you know. When I do come back the cavalry will not be far

113 Ralph

away. It may be that I will meet some of the soldiers, you know."

"That is possible. They are liable to be heading this way now. If they have heard that the Utes have gathered in this vicinity they will surely be coming. But I am afraid they have not heard it."

Wild knew it was a pretty sure thing that the redskins would attack the fort before sunrise, so he got ready for the relay race he was going to ride.

He advised the lieutenant to call all the settlers and their families inside the stockade right away, and to fetch all the provisions and what they desired to save from their cabins with them.

Lieutenant Ainsworth acted on the advice.

The contents of the store was brought inside the block house, too, and then they were ready to stand a siege.

A brook trickled right through the enclosure, so they would have plenty of water for themselves and horses.

It was past midnight when all arrangements had been made.

The frightened women and children huddled together and the men went about with pale, set faces.

There were just twenty-five men to defend the fort, counting Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart.

Young Wild West would have to leave them to ride his relay race for help.

CHAPTER V.

WILD ARRIVES AT FORT GRIFFIN.

It was just about ten minutes before dawn that a fierce yell rang out all around the stockade of Fort Feather.

It did not come as a surprise to the waiting men, for to a Wild West had discovered that the Utes were approaching nearly an hour before.

The dashing young deadshot decided not to leave the fort until he had seen what sort of a move the besieged party would make in the way of holding the fort.

He knew they would be able to hold it against the three hundred Indians for several hours, for they had three field pieces there, and if the gunners were any good they would be able to create a fearful havoc in the ranks of the foe.

That would mean a halt in the fighting, and the Indians would probably wait for reinforcements before they renewed the fight.

"We want to make them understand that they are not going to have an easy thing of it," he said to the lieutenant, and that officer nodded.

He was a brave young man, was Lieutenant Ainsworth, and he was not the one to desert his post as long as he could lift a hand in its defense.

When the fierce yell sounded every man was on the alert.

The redskins would storm the stockade from several

points at once, Wild knew, and it was for the men with the field pieces to train them where they would do the most good.

"The best thing to do is to let them break a hole in the stockade, and then as they come through give it to them," he said.

The lieutenant nodded and gave his instructions accordingly.

Not a shot was fired from the fort, though the redskins sent a storm of bullets at the block house the instant their warwhoop had sounded.

The demons had axes with them, for they could be heard cutting at the logs that were driven in the ground to form the stockade.

"Let them cut," said Wild, calmly.

For ten minutes the cutting was kept up and then the stout stakes gave away.

At the same moment several Indians began climbing over in two other places.

Though it was still dark, their forms could be seen.

Wild set the emigrants at work picking them off.

"Make every shot tell," he said; "don't pull a trigger unless you are certain the bullet is going to land in the body of a redskin somewhere."

"I am going to have a hand in this," said pretty Agnes Graves, as she ran past our hero and the lieutenant, her rifle in her hand.

"A nice girl that," observed the lieutenant. "She is as brave as a man. I must get acquainted with her, for there is nothing I like so well about a woman as to see her courageous."

"It is a pity the rest of the women in the party are not like her," was the reply. "She will be needed all right before you get through with this business. You will be able to keep the redskins off, but they will hang on like bull-dogs and try to make you exhaust your ammunition."

"And by that time you will have the cavalry here?"

"I hope so."

Just then there was a yell that echoed over the plains, and a bunch of the redskins surged through the opening they had made in the stockade.

Bang!

One of the field pieces thundered and the slugs it had been loaded with went true to the mark.

This sufficed to dampen the spirits of the Indians somewhat, and they withdrew in double-quick order.

Young Wild West nodded.

"That was all right," he said to the lieutenant. "Just keep that kind of work up. Don't load the pieces with the balls, but use slugs right along. The range is short, and you can do ten times the damage."

Then he walked over to where his partners were engaged in instructing the party old Dave Burlew was in charge of.

"Well, boys, I am off," he said. "I will see you again before dark to-night, I hope. You keep the redskins off till I get back. It is going to be a relay race that I ride,

and if the horses I get hold of are only half as good as Spitfire I'll win! Good-by!"

"Good-by, Wild!" said Jim.

"Look out fur ther measly coyotes when yer go out," Charlie added.

Wild's sorrel stallion was ready and waiting, and waving an adieu to his partners, he mounted and rode for the gate of the stockade.

It was opened for him, and out he dashed.

He was just in time to see the Utes firing the log houses of the settlers, but he paid little attention to them.

That was something he had expected to happen before this.

He was a hundred yards from the stockade before he was discovered by the redskins, and then, as a dozen of them galloped after him, he uttered a shout of defiance and let the noble animal go at the top of his speed.

A few shots were fired at him, but they all fell short, and not bothering to answer them he kept on.

The redskins followed him for about fifteen minutes, and then finding themselves outdistanced they gave up the chase.

When day broke Young Wild West was more than five miles from Fort Feather and riding like the wind.

Used to the saddle, he did not worry about the long ride he was taking.

He could stand it as long as he could find horses to carry him.

Spitfire was just in trim for the thirty-mile dash, and when Wild thought it time for him to slacken for a short rest it was difficult to make him understand that he needed it.

But he had it at the end of fifteen miles, and then our hero allowed him to take up the tireless lope that horses of the Wild West are common for.

This was kept up all the way to Creekville, and when he arrived there the dashing young deadshot halted in front of the tavern and cried out:

"I want a fresh horse, and a good one! I am riding to Fort Griffin for help. Fort Feather is surrounded by three hundred Utes, and there are only twenty-five men and a lot of women and children there to defend it. Hurry up, there!"

Half a dozen men were there, and the moment they heard the words they ran to get a horse.

Wild looked at his watch.

He found that he had covered the distance in half an hour.

He took a bite of something the landlord of the tavern insisted on giving him and quickly swallowed a cup of coffee.

Then a likely-looking gray mustang was brought out and the change was quickly made.

"Get what men you can together and ride over to the fort, when I send some more from Blackbird," he called out. "Take good care of my horse, and have him ready when I come back."

Then he was off on the relay race again.

The mustang was a good one, as he found out when he had tried him for ten miles of the race.

Another five miles and then the dashing young deadshot, who was riding to save the lives of those at Fort Feather, suddenly beheld a band of perhaps fifty redskins riding across the prairie in the direction of the besieged fort.

They were making a detour, so as to keep clear of the settlement, though why it was they did not attack it Wild did not know.

It must be that they have arranged, through the medium of scouts and runners, to destroy Fort Feather," he muttered, as he rode on.

But the Indians had spied him, and they no doubt divined that he was riding for help, since they could easily tell that he was heading for Fort Griffin.

Like a thundercloud they bore down toward him.

But Wild did not mean that they should catch him.

The horse he rode was still comparatively fresh, and he was not the least bit alarmed.

He rode straight on, for he did not want to lose any time by making a detour.

Then the redskins began shooting at him.

They were not more than half a mile away and the bullets began to sing through the air around his head.

"I guess I had better let you fellows know that I can shoot a little," he muttered, and, swinging in the saddle, he brought his rifle to his shoulder and took a quick aim at the foremost of the redskins.

Cra-ang!

As the report rang out one of them threw up his hands and fell from the saddle.

Cra-ang!

Again the young deadshot fired and another one dropped.

That caused them to slacken their speed, and, with a laugh, Young Wild West rode on.

He was soon out of range, for the mustang stuck right to his work.

In one hour and fifty minutes from the time he left Creekville Wild was at Blackbird.

He halted in front of the blacksmith shop, where half a dozen men were congregated.

"Get a party together and ride for Fort Feather," he shouted. "The Utes are besieging it. You will find me ready to go with you when you get to Creekville. Get me a fresh horse right away, and a good one, too! Hurry! I must get to Fort Griffin and bring back the cavalry to save Fort Feather!"

"Here's as good a nag as was ever straddled, pard!" exclaimed a cowboy, as he led out a tough little bay. "He's jest been shod, an' he's ready ter go like chain lightnin'!"

"Good!" and with wonderful quickness Young Wild West leaped from the back of the tired mustang and mounted the fresh pony.

He was away like a shot, scarcely losing three minutes for the stop.

Wild did not feel a bit tired.

With the fresh horse under him he felt that he would not be more than two hours, at the most, in reaching Fort Griffin.

In spite of what the cowboy had said about the horse, Wild soon found that it was not as good a one as he had left at the blacksmith shop.

But it was as good as the average, and that meant that he could cover thirty miles in two hours.

The trail was pretty even, and that would help out.

He found out the gait that best suited the pony and let him take it.

In this way he kept going until twenty miles of the distance had been covered.

Then our hero saw half a dozen cowboys riding toward him, singing and yelling.

He knew they had been drinking, so he decided to go right on and not bother with them.

But this they did not propose to allow him to do.

They blocked his way and Wild was forced to come to a halt.

"Don't bother me, boys," he said. "I am riding a relay race to Fort Griffin. The redskins are besieging Fort Feather."

"Git out with your lyin', you young galoot!" answered one of them. "Git down off that horse! You've got ter dance fur us!"

Instead of doing as he was told, Wild urged the pony forward, and, reaching out, he caught the man by the nape of his neck and swung him from the saddle.

Then he swung the pony around, and facing the astonished cowboys, drew his revolvers.

"I want you galoots to light out—and do it quick!" he exclaimed. "I am in a hurry, for lives depend upon me. The first galoot that raises his hand will get a bullet! Do you hear what I say?"

There was no mistaking the ring in the boy's voice.

Though they had been drinking, the cowboys realized that they had made a mistake.

"Go on, young feller," said one. "I reckon yer mean what yer say. If you're in a hurry ter git help fur Fort Feather, go on!"

Wild was away before the last words were spoken.

He knew he had cowed the gang, and he was not going to wait.

He looked back and saw the fellow he had unhorsed raise his revolver to take a shot at him.

But his companions would not let him do it, so the fellow was spared from receiving an answering bullet from the dashing young deadshot.

Wild urged the pony to his best the last five miles of the race to Fort Griffin.

When he got there the pony was exhausted, but he was as cool and tireless himself as though he had not ridden further than a mile.

"Who is in charge here?" he asked a sentry, as he dashed up to the fort and halted.

"Colonel Fortier," was the reply.

"I must see him at once. The Utes, three hundred strong, have surrounded Fort Feather, and there are only twenty-five men there, all told, to defend it."

"If you bear a message from the fort give it to me and I will see that it is delivered."

Wild slid from the back of his pony.

"Stand aside!" he cried. "I am in a hurry. It means life or death for men, women and innocent children."

CHAPTER VI.

WILD FINDS THE CAVALRY.

"I don't care what it means," retorted the man on guard duty, who was a stout man with a florid face. "The general is taking a nap just now, but if you give me a message addressed to him I'll see to it that he gets it."

"The message I have I will tell to him, so just stand out of the way and let me pass. I am Young Wild West."

"It makes no difference who you are! You can't go to the general's quarters until he gives permission."

"Can't eh? We'll see about that!"

As quick as a flash Wild pushed him aside and darted through the gateway, before which the man had been parading up and down.

But the guard was not to be fooled that way.

He wanted more than that to settle him.

He lowered his musket, so the bayonet was leveled straight at the boy, and made a rush for him.

There is not the least doubt but that he would have run him through if Wild had let him do it.

But the dashing young deadshot easily avoided the thrust.

Then, before the sentry could recover his balance, he sent out a straight right with his fist and caught him on the forehead.

As the man staggered back Wild gave him a left in the pit of his stomach.

He knew he had to thrash the fellow to make him keep out of his way.

"Help!" shouted the sentry as he went down.

His cry brought half a dozen soldiers to the scene.

"Seize that boy and put him in the guard house!" the fellow who had been knocked down cried out wildly. "He tried to kill me!"

The soldiers were about to obey, but they quailed when they saw a revolver in Wild's hand.

"I want to see the commander of Fort Griffin!" he exclaimed; "and I will shoot the first galoot that interferes with me before I do see him!"

"Why, hello! It's Young Wild West!" said a soldier wearing the stripes of a corporal. "Boys, I guess he can

go where he pleases, for I think he has the document with him that says so."

Wild recognized the corporal's face, but he could not call him by name just then.

"Corporal," said he, "I must see General Fortier at once. It is important that all the cavalymen he can spare should get to Fort Feather without delay. The fort is besieged by Utes, three hundred in number, and there is no telling how long they can hold out. He knows about how many men there are there."

"I guess you can see him, Young Wild West," was the reply. "Come with me."

But the sentry, who was now on his feet, raised objections.

"Put him in the guardhouse!" he shouted.

"I'll thrash that fellow before I leave," said Wild, "and I am going to leave pretty soon, too."

Just then who should appear on the scene but the general himself.

Wild had never met him before, so he quickly produced the document signed by the major-general, which he always carried in a small leather case.

This paper gave Young Wild West the privilege of going and coming where and when he pleased among the military posts of the Far West.

"Never mind that," said the general, waving his hand; "I heard the last of what you were saying just now. What is the trouble?"

The young deadshot told him quickly.

The general's brow clouded and he shrugged his shoulders uneasily.

"I am sorry," said he, shaking his head, "but we received word that the redskins were gathering at a point fifty miles down the river, and I despatched Captain Darius and his troop, together with all the reserved forces here, to the scene. They set out this morning."

"Down the river, you say, general?"

"Yes."

"Good! I will overtake them, then, for I am going back to Blackbird right away. From there I will ride to Creekville, and then by heading toward the river in a straight line I will be able to head them off. I would like to have a fresh horse, general."

"You shall have the best we have here."

Then he took the document Wild had in his hand and hurriedly looked it over.

"Young Wild West, the scout, eh?" he observed. "Well, I am glad to meet you. Anything you ask for you shall have."

"Well, I should like to ask one thing of you."

"What is it?"

"I want to thrash that sentry of yours for trying to run me through with a bayonet, and I want you to let him off without punishment."

"He tried to run his bayonet through you, did he?"

"Yes, general. But I don't want him punished accord-

ing to military rules. I promised to thrash him, and I am anxious to keep my word."

"Do it, then. I will look on. Your horse will be here by the time you have done it."

The sentry was astonished when he heard this from the commander of the fort.

But he was not a coward, and he scowled as Wild came out of the gate toward him.

"Put down that gun!" said the boy, commandingly.

"I am not under your orders, sir," was the stiff reply.

Wild sprang forward and seized the gun.

A quick twist and it was wrenched from the soldier's hands.

The general stood looking on, with folded arms.

He was a man who liked to see things done up in right shape, and as he was the boss there he was going to see the soldier thrashed.

He had heard enough of Young Wild West to make him have the opinion that the boy was capable of thrashing any ordinary man, and surely that was all the sentry was.

Wild meant to humble the fellow, as well as make him feel the weight of a few blows.

He slapped him on the cheek as he pulled the gun away from him and exclaimed:

"If you will apologize I will let up on you, as I haven't much time."

Whizz!

Instead of apologizing, the soldier shot out his fist and Wild felt the wind of it as he ducked.

Biff!

Our hero landed one on his left cheek and sent him staggering.

Spat! he followed with a right swing that caught him between the eyes and down he went.

The sentry was too dazed to get up right away, and turning to the corporal, who was the only officer present, the general said:

"Relieve the guard and have him placed in the guardhouse immediately."

"Don't punish him, general," said Wild, as he saw a horse being brought to him. "I must be off. I hope to overtake the cavalry and be in time to save Fort Feather."

The general waved his hand and Wild leaped in the saddle.

It was a good fresh horse, and without stopping to eat anything at the fort, the dashing young Prince of the Saddle rode off, having remained there less than fifteen minutes.

He looked at his watch and found that he had spent six hours, less ten minutes, since he had started from Fort Feather.

"I'll eat my dinner at Blackbird, and it won't take me ten minutes to do it, either," he muttered, as the horse galloped along for all it was worth.

Wild certainly put that horse through.

He only stopped once on the thirty-mile trail from Fort Griffin to Blackbird.

When he reached the settlement he halted in front of the blacksmith shop and found another fresh horse waiting for him.

The people had made ready for him, for they realized that he was riding to save lives, and that he would want to get back to Fort Feather as soon as possible.

Wild paused long enough to eat a sandwich and drink a couple of cups of milk, and during that time he learned that thirty armed men had gone to Creekville to join those who were going to help drive the Utes from Fort Feather.

The cowboy who had loaned him the horse was gone, so Wild left word that his horse was at Fort Griffin, and that he could exchange the one he now left for it when he had time to ride over.

Then he went on his mad dash to save the fort.

The last horse was the worst of any he had ridden so far, and when he got to Creekville he found that he had taken up four hours and a half in the sixty miles he had covered on the way back.

"Never mind," he thought; "I can't get back to the fort in twelve hours, as I told them I would, because I must find the cavalry before I go there. I'll take my own noble Spitfire now, and then I will feel at home, and know just what I can do. Sixty miles won't hurt him in a day, not with the rest he has had."

He found that the sorrel had been rubbed down in a thorough manner, and that the best of care otherwise had been given him.

"Hello, old fellow!" called out Wild, as the sorrel was brought out. "I'm just as glad to see you as you are to see me. You thought I had deserted you for another, I suppose. But that will never be, old boy!"

Then he took a short run around to limber himself up, for he was getting a little stiff by this time, and vaulted upon the back of his own trusty steed.

The quality of endurance was one of the greatest that Young Wild West possessed.

Few could have done what he had done so far, let alone ride another thirty or forty miles.

But Wild never thought of quitting.

He had not found the cavalry yet.

If he had only known that they had left Fort Griffin he would have had them to the rescue before this.

But he felt, somehow, that he was not going to be too late to save the besieged fort.

He left Creekville with the knowledge that nearly fifty men had set out over three hours before to go and fight the Utes, and that was some consolation.

If they could manage to get through the Indian lines and reach the fort they would be a welcome addition to the besieged party.

Wild rode in a straight line for Green River now.

He followed no trail whatever, but rode over hill and vale at the speed that Spitfire could hold the longest.

When he had covered twenty miles, and could see nothing of the cavalry yet, he grew a little worried.

He was easily twenty miles from the fort, too, which lay below him to his right.

But there was a rocky ridge five miles ahead, and there was no telling but that the cavalry might be riding along the other side of that.

Wild headed for the ridge, which was well wooded.

He reached it, and finding a defile started through it.

He had not covered more than a quarter of a mile when he heard the cracking of firearms not far away.

The sounds came from the other side of the ridge, it seemed, so he kept right on.

Two minutes later he came in sight of half a dozen painted redskins riding as though for their lives.

There was an open stretch just ahead, and as he dashed out after the fleeing Utes he heard the thunder of hoofs coming from a direction almost parallel with that which he had been riding.

He craned his neck and looked around to the right and beheld the blue uniforms of troopers riding through a gorge.

They were the cavalymen he had been looking for so long.

As Young Wild West saw the approaching cavalymen he swung his hat in the air and shouted:

"Fort Feather is besieged by the redskins! I am riding the finish of a relay race to save the garrison. Come on!"

A cheer went up from those in the lead, for some of them had heard and understood his words.

The sorrel stallion leaped over the body of a slain redskin and took the lead of the cavalry horses.

Spitfire was right in his element now.

He had been racing against time, but now he probably thought that it was up to him to beat the cavalry horses, something he could do with the greatest of ease.

But Wild held him in check and got alongside the captain in charge of the men.

He found him to be Captain Darius, of Fort Feather, and in a few words he made known the situation to him.

"To Fort Feather, boys!" cried the captain, waving his sword.

Then as they headed down the river, which could be seen in the distance, he told our hero how they had come a few Indians, and, seeing that they were in war they had given pursuit and scattered them.

"Well, you will have a harder time scattering the Fort Feather, I think," Wild answered. "But I guess we'll manage to do it. If Lieutenant Ainsworth and my two partners have been able to hold the fort everything will be all right."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIGHT AT FORT FEATHER.

As soon as Young Wild West had gone Lieutenant Ainsworth came over to Cheyenne Charlie and said:

"I shall rely upon you and Dart to help me out and advise me in this business, since Young Wild West has gone off on his relay race for help. You folks know more about Indian warfare than I do, though I have had quite a little experience myself. The fiends have got their attention drawn to your partner now, and some of them are riding after him. I hope they don't catch him."

"Don't worry about that," answered the scout, with a chuckle. "No Injun ever owned a horse what could catch that sorrel. Wild will soon leave 'em behind."

"You may bet on that," Jim added.

There was a lull in the shooting until it got daylight.

The Utes had failed in their attempt to get into the stockade under the cover of the darkness, and now they were conjuring up some other plan of action.

As it gradually grew light the besieged party felt better.

They would now be able to see, and that would enable them to shoot straight at their painted foes.

Charlie and Jim knew quite well that the redskins would be watching to pick off the men from a distance, so they advised them to keep well under cover.

Gradually it became lighter, and then the Indians took up the firing again.

But their bullets were wasted.

They had congregated in a little grove that was not more than two hundred feet square and only a hundred yards from the fort.

The trees would form them quite a protection, and when the lieutenant saw how nicely they were stationed a frown came over his face.

It was never thought that an attacking party would get as close to the block house as that, I guess, or those trees would never have been left standing," he observed.

"Well, it will give ther redskins a chance ter lay low when they feel like it," retorted Cheyenne Charlie. "But I reckon if a cannon loaded with slugs was fired every now an' then at ther little grove it would make 'em feel a bit uneasy."

"That is so. But I don't want that done unless there is no help for it. So long as they stay there, and let us alone, with the exception of a few shots now and then, I guess we had better let things be as they are."

"That is right," spoke up Dart. "We had better save our slugs to throw into them when they make a charge. It won't be very long before they do that, either. They are getting ready for something now."

"I s'pose they know jest about how many there is here, and they think they can't help but win, if they keep at it," the scout remarked. "Well, there's enough of 'em there ter wipe us out in a hurry, but they've got ter git ter us ter do it, an' that's where ther trouble comes in. How are they goin' ter git here an' make it a hand-to-hand fight?"

"Well, we don't want to allow them to get as close as that," was the lieutenant's reply.

The three rather antiquated field pieces that belonged to the fort were trained toward the break in the stockade,

and, crouching behind the barricade of logs, the gunners waited for the order to use them.

"Them's ther things what'll do ther business," remarked the scout, smiling grimly. "If you've got powder an' slugs enough, lieutenant, I reckon we kin keep 'em off till Wild comes back."

"We have plenty of powder," was the retort, "but the slugs are not very plentiful. We have balls for the pieces."

"Well, there's plenty of nails in them kegs ther storekeeper an' his help rolled in here, ain't there?"

"Yes, there are plenty of nails."

"Well, they'll do, then. Nails is fine ter shoot out of a cannon at short range."

The store and the cabins, which had been fired before it got daylight, were still burning, though most of them were in ruins now.

The families that had occupied them were heart-sick at the sight, but Charlie and Jim went around among them and told them there was plenty of timber to be had close by, and that they hoped they would not have to shoot all the nails belonging to the storekeeper into the ranks of the redskins.

This sort of talk cheered them up, and when someone suggested that men could not fight very well on an empty stomach the women took the hint and began to prepare breakfast.

"So long as they don't manage to set the block house afire I think we will stand a pretty good chance," said Lieutenant Ainsworth, as he sat down to a breakfast of fried ham, corn bread and coffee. "I agree with you two fellows when you say that the three field pieces will hold them off pretty well. But we can't have them turned in every direction at one time, and the Utes are so quick to find a weak spot, you know, and there is no telling but that they might get at work with blazing arrows and fire the roof of the block house."

"Jest let 'em try that little game," answered Charlie. "I'll shoot all ther Injuns what comes close enough ter send any blazin' arrows this way."

Half the men were given their breakfast while the other half kept a watch on the redskins.

When the first lot had finished they relieved the waiters and they had their turn.

The women worked faithfully to supply their every want, for they knew the defenders of the fort must eat well to keep up their strength.

It was just as the sun came up that the breakfast was eaten by the men, and after that they went out ready to fight.

The Indians were getting ready, too, for they were now mounting their ponies.

They evidently meant to ride through the break in the stockade this time and storm the block house from the backs of their ponies.

"Come on, boys!" cried Cheyenne Charlie. "We'll meet 'em an' give 'em fits!"

With Jim at his side, the scout started for the break.

Behind them came Dave Burlew and the eight men belonging to the wagon train.

The troopers, under command of Lieutenant Ainsworth, moved off to the left to rake the Utes as they approached.

Five minutes later the attack began.

Fully two hundred mounted redskins started for the stockade, yelling and firing as they rode.

The lieutenant remained wonderfully cool, and when he thought they were close enough to make the fire telling he gave the word.

The ripping, cracking sound the rifles made awoke the echoes, and when the lieutenant saw the advancing Indians waver in the front ranks he knew the cavalymen had not shot wildly.

They were firing at the Utes from an angle, and volley after volley was poured into them.

Young Wild West's partners held the men they had down until the redskins were within fifty feet of the stockade.

Then Cheyenne Charlie gave the word to fire.

Straight into the ranks of the Indians went the death-dealing bullets, and horses and men went down in a heap, almost entirely blocking the way for those who were surging along behind in the mad charge to capture the wooden fort.

Three times the men fired, and then, at a word from the scout, they broke and ran out of the way.

Cheyenne Charlie waved his hat to the gunners now, and they understood.

Bang—bang—bang!

The three pieces spoke, one after the other in quick succession, and as the Ute warriors were struggling to get through the opening over the tops of the fallen, they made a good target.

The effect was disastrous to the Indians and sickening to the whites who looked on.

Such slaughter as that was not to the liking of the majority of them, but they all realized that there was no other way to keep from falling into the hands of the savage horde.

A huge hole was torn through the mounted body of warriors and then the smoke settled, so they could scarcely be seen.

A few tried to come through and make for the fort, but they were seen, and two volleys sent back those who escaped the bullets.

In just ten minutes from the time the Indians started on their ride from the little grove the shooting stopped.

The second attack had been resisted and many were the Ute warriors that went to the Happy Hunting Grounds during that brief interval.

"I guess that'll do 'em fur a while," observed the scout, grimly, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow. "But they'll try it half a dozen times yet, if there's any of 'em left by that time. I reckon we must have cleaned up about fifty of 'em since we started in."

"And only two men wounded on our side," added the lieutenant, hopefully. "We stand a very good chance of holding the fort, providing the Utes are not reinforced."

"That is likely ter happen, but I hope it won't," answered Charlie. "Hello! There goes a signal now!"

Sure enough, a thin column of smoke was ascending from the little grove.

And a minute or two later there were two more of them close to the first.

"That means for any of the Utes in sight to come here at once," observed Jim.

The lieutenant looked uneasy again.

As the fighting had ceased for a time, he gave orders for the barricade near the block house to be strengthened, and then all the logs that could be found were brought into play.

Loop-holes were left, so if they were forced to stay behind it, before making a final retreat into the block house, they could pick off the Indians without running much chance of being hit themselves.

The three columns of smoke continued to rise for the space of several minutes.

Charlie and Jim scanned the horizon, but failed to see any answer to the signal.

This caused them to feel better, for they knew the redskins were asking for help, and that meant that they knew they would have a tough time of it as they were.

The morning wore on without any further fighting, except now and then a shot at long range.

At length some of the men ventured out to the smoking ruins of the store and cabins.

There was nothing there that could be saved, except a few logs, and these were dragged in to strengthen the barricade.

This had just about been accomplished when the sharp eyes of Jim Dart detected a band of Indians approaching from the West.

They were the same crowd that Young Wild West had met, and it must have been that they had headed farther south than the fort lay, or they would have got there before.

"There is half a hundred more of them," said Jim, quietly. "They will make up for those who went under this morning, I suppose."

"Yes, an' I don't like it a bit," retorted Charlie. "The red galoots mean business, I reckon, an' they're goin' to make it warm fur us afore they're through. They will ride up in a bunch ther next time they come. They will spread out an' come fur all parts of ther stockade at once; see if they don't. When an Injun gits downed at one thing he always tries some other way."

The band knew just where to go, so they made a wide detour to keep out of range of the fort and finally brought up at the grove.

"I reckon now is a good time ter mow down some of them trees, lieutenant," said Charlie. "We want ter let the red galoots know that we're ready fur business."

"Very well," was the reply; "I will do as you say."

Orders were given to train the guns on the grove, and that they be loaded with the regular balls that fitted them.

When all was in readiness the bombardment began.

The first three shots did very little damage, but when two more had been fired the Indians were seen to scatter and ride out on the prairie.

"I reckon ther galoots didn't have much time ter tell ther newcomers what had happened," observed the scout. "Jest pile it inter 'em a couple of times more."

Bang—bang—bang!

The guns were turned loose again, and the trees in the grove shivered, while wild yells went up from the Utes.

"I guess that'll make 'em know that we ain't asleep," chuckled Cheyenne Charlie.

But though it did considerable damage to them, it only made the Indians make another attack all the sooner.

They spread out in a huge fan and came tearing toward the fort a few minutes later, yelling and firing as they came.

Of course none of their shots took effect, for the garrison was too well protected.

There was only one way to get possession of the block house, and that was to rush right up to it and engage the defenders hand to hand.

And that is just what the Utes meant to do now.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UTES TAKE A PRISONER.

"Charlie, I guess it is going to be a little longer fight this time," observed Jim Dart, as he watched for a chance to get a shot at the redskins, who were now riding in a circle about the fort enclosure.

The red demons were practicing the old trick of lying close to their horses' necks, and gradually nearing the object of attack as they rode in a narrowing circle.

"All right," answered the scout. "If it is goin' ter be a long fight we'll have ter put up with it, that's all. There's a good many of 'em, I know, but there'll be aamed sight less of 'em afore we git through."

"Yes, but will there be enough less of them to make it us any good? Wild is hardly at Fort Griffin by this e, even if everything has worked right with him."

"We'll come out of it all right, see if we don't. Jest go n' pick out four or five of ther best shots ther lieutenant has got in his crowd, an' we'll go up in ther block house an' pick off some of ther red galoots."

Jim said no more, but hastened to do as the scout suggested.

He soon came back with four of the men stationed at the fort, and then the six of them sought a place where they could fire at the circling savages without showing themselves up as targets.

The four soldiers proved to be marksmen of no mean calibre, and the saddles of the horses began to empty as fast as they fired.

Charlie and Jim never missed a shot.

They kept right at it, and realizing that they were losing men all the time the Utes began to ride straight for the stockade.

They came from all sides at once, and then it was that the lieutenant gave his men the word to fire.

Volley after volley was poured into the ranks of the advancing redskins, but they came right on, and soon the whole crowd was close to the stockade wall.

They were now partly protected by the posts that formed the stockade, and when they dismounted and crouched around it in a double line it looked as though nothing could save the brave band of whites now.

"Git all ther women an' children in ther block house!" shouted Cheyenne Charlie.

"They are all in but one," answered Alfred Grayes. "and that is my daughter. She insists on making a stand with the men. Agnes, get inside! It is the orders."

But the girl acted as though she did not hear him.

She was crouching behind the barricade, her rifle to her shoulder, and just then she sent a death-dealing bullet at the crowd of redskins that came surging through the break in the stockade wall.

"Ther gal is true blue," said the scout, with a nod of approval. "She's as good as any man you've got in ther bunch."

Over the wall the Indians came on all sides.

The fire that was directed at them was fierce, but it did not stay them.

"If we kin drive 'em back this time we'll be all right," said the scout. "Steady, there! Git them cannons ter work! It's slugs what ther red galoots want!"

The pieces spoke just then and in three different places the Indians fell like grain before the sickle.

But the gaps closed instantly, it seemed, and on they came.

Volley after volley was fired, but it did not stop the rush.

The Utes were forgetful of the fact that they were suffering a great loss and they came right on.

It was a fearful slaughter, but the redskins were in such numbers that it made little difference.

Some of them were bound to get there, and that meant that it was time for the brave defenders to take to the block house.

Cheyenne Charlie reluctantly gave this advice.

He saw that they could not check the advance of the red fiends, for they were swarming from all sides.

Once in the block house, they could hold them off indefinitely, providing they did not succeed in setting fire to it.

So into the fortification they rushed, firing one last volley as they did so.

They had barely got there and shut the huge oaken door when a scream sounded from the outside.

"My daughter!" cried Graves. "The Indians have got her!"

Jim Dart peered through a loop-hole and saw that this was true.

Agnes Graves had been one of the last to leave the barricade, and an Indian, more audacious than the rest, had pounced upon her.

The capture of a white maiden was something great to them, and the brave knew it.

He struck her rifle from her hands and dragged her off behind his followers.

Yellow Snake, the head chief, who was leading the attacking force, saw what the brave had done, and he promptly ordered him to take the girl back to the shelter of the grove, where there were some wounded Indians.

The girl, though very brave and determined during the fight, was frightened beyond measure at the sudden turn of affairs, and she screamed loudly for help.

But there was no use in that, for the redskin had secured her arms to her sides and he was bearing her away from the fort.

In the smoke of the battle this was easy for him to do, and as the brave girl looked back and found she could no longer see the fort she gave herself up as lost.

Into the little grove she was carried, and there she found that the Utes had dug a hollow to shield themselves from the cannon balls.

The soil was sandy and they had dug a long, wide trench about four feet in depth.

It was here that the wounded were being cared for by two medicine men, who had been pressed into service by Yellow Snake.

There were perhaps twenty of the wounded, altogether, and many dead bodies were scattered among the trees.

At any other time the sight would have been a sickening one to the girl, but just then she was so frightened at her own peril that she hardly noticed anything that came before her range of vision.

The brave who had captured her was really nothing more than a young buck, who bore the name of Big Tomahawk.

It was the first fight with the palefaces he had ever been in, and he had distinguished himself greatly that day by his bravery.

But the capture of the paleface maiden was bound to add to his glory, and he knew it.

The wounded Indians looked at him with indifference as he brought his prize to the excavation and coolly tied her to a log.

They were stoical, and though they appeared not to notice anything that went on, they knew that their forces had scored a triumph by making the capture.

It took the girl fully five minutes to come back to something like her normal state of mind.

Though she had been rather roughly handled, she had not been harmed so far, and that made her have hopes of getting out of the scrape she had fallen in.

"Ugh!" said her captor, as he squatted on the ground before her; "paleface maiden heap much nice."

"Let me go back to the fort!" she cried, trembling at the glance the red man shot at her.

"Paleface maiden no go back to fort; fort be burned putty soon," was the reply.

"No, it won't!" she exclaimed, defiantly. "The Utes will never get the best of the people at the fort. They will be sorry for their work to-day. If you want to save yourself from the soldiers when they come you had better let me go. Give me your name, and I will try and not have you punished for what you have done."

"Ugh!" said Big Tomahawk, not knowing what else to say just then.

"You have made a big mistake," went on Agnes, gaining courage as she spoke. "The Utes are not strong enough to whip the white men. They will be badly beaten, and then those who don't get killed will be put in prison."

The young buck shook his head.

Then he got up and said something to one of the medicine men in his own language, after which he started back for the scene of the battle, no doubt looking for more glory.

But when the redskin got back there he found that the tide had turned, for the palefaces inside the block house had driven the Utes off.

Though some of them were under the cover of the outside of the barricade, they were there more for the purpose of protection than they were for fighting.

They had lost heavily, and had enough of it for the present.

But Big Tomahawk was reckless, and he rushed forward and tried to urge the redskins to rush up to the block house.

That was where his glory came to a sudden end, for a bullet struck him in the centre of his forehead and he dropped without having time to utter his death-cry.

Gradually the redskins were forced back and soon they were beating a retreat for the grove.

Yellow Snake had not been wounded, though he had been in the thickest of the fray.

It was toward the middle of the afternoon when he thought it about time to stop and find out how they stood, and as he got back to the hole in the grove his face wore anything but a satisfied expression.

For an hour after that the wounded came limping in, and there was a sort of gloom in the Indian camp.

All this time Agnes Graves had remained tied to the log, none of the redskins paying particular attention to her.

But when the chief found that he had lost over a hundred in killed and fifty wounded, he took time to pay his respects to the fair captive.

It had occurred to him that he would win the fort through the girl.

"Paleface maiden got friends in fort?" he asked, looking at her.

"Yes, my father and mother are there," was the reply in a trembling voice, for she had no idea of what was coming.

"Good! She wants to see them again."

"Yes, I want to see them again," said Agnes, her hopes rising.

"Paleface maiden write a note to soldiers at fort. She say that if palefaces no surrender she will be killed and her scalp sent to them."

The girl understood.

"But you would not kill me if they did not surrender, would you?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes, me kill paleface maiden very quick," was the reply.

"I will write what you want me to," she said, thinking it best to humor him.

Yellow Snake nodded.

Then he found a piece of paper and the stub of a pencil and ordered the girl's right hand to be freed.

Before she began to write he looked at her and said:

"Palefaces will lose anyhow when dark comes, so they better surrender. If they surrender Yellow Snake will let paleface maiden go with her father and mother. All rest of paleface men must die! Write that, paleface maiden."

With a hand that trembled not a little, the girl wrote to the effect of what he said.

Then she added:

"Don't agree to this, for I am sure the chief will not have me killed. He is only trying to scare you into surrendering. Keep at it the way you have been, for Young Wild West will soon be back with help, and then you can save me."

Then the chief made her read what she had written, or the part she wanted him to hear, and then he took the note and gave it to one of his braves, who stood with a white handkerchief, ready to sally forth and deliver the note.

The captive girl could not see him after he went away, but in about ten minutes he came back, shaking his head in the negative.

"Palefaces say wait till to-night; then they send answer," was the report.

Yellow Snake was not satisfied with this.

But he did not know what course to pursue.

The other chief had been badly wounded and was lying unconscious, so he could not consult with him.

He decided to call a council of the leading braves, however, and it was done immediately.

It took them nearly an hour to decide what was to be done.

They thought that it would be after midnight if help came to the besieged ones, so they concluded to wait until

sunset and then give the palefaces a chance to surrender. If they failed to do it then they would cut the girl's scalp lock off and send it to the fort by shooting it over the stockade wall with an arrow.

Then hostilities would be resumed, and with the darkness to aid them, they hoped to take Fort Feather.

CHAPTER IX.

WILD REACHES THE FORT.

It was pretty close to sunset when Young Wild West, riding along at the head of a hundred and fifty cavalrymen, came in sight of Fort Feather.

All appeared to be quiet there just then, but it did not take him long to discover the headquarters of the Indians in the grove.

"Hurrah!" he cried; "they have held the fort against them, Captain Darius. We will be in time, after all! My relay race wasn't for nothing, after all!"

They were riding along the edge of a timber patch just then, so it was hardly likely that they could be seen from the fort unless someone had a glass turned that way.

"If you think everything is all right there we will halt and give the horses a rest, so they will be in trim for the charge upon the Utes," said the captain.

"A good idea, captain," Wild retorted. "Here is as good a place as any. It is only about five miles from the fort, so you can come when the horses have rested for half an hour. I will go on. If the redskins see me they will think I have come back alone, and that I failed to get the help I went after."

"You had better not try to reach the fort alone. Those red fiends would head you off before you got there. They must be keeping a watch around, and they would see you before you got a mile from here."

"Well, I will make a circle off to the left, and then if they do try to get me I'll show them that Spitfire isn't completely tired out yet. He has covered a good sixty miles to-day, but he can beat anything the Utes have got, I'll bet!"

Captain Darius said no more.

"I think it probable that the redskins are waiting for it to get dark, so they can try another attack on the fort," Wild resumed. "It looks to me as though they have fared pretty hard, but the fact that they have located near it makes it pretty certain that they haven't given it up as a bad job yet."

"I tell you what you had better do, Young Wild West," said the captain, after he had thought for a minute; "you just wait here ten minutes, and then we'll all ride over together. We will turn off to the left here and get the timber strip between us and the redskins. We can get pretty close to the fort before they see us, then."

"Well, all right," answered our hero. "I consider that my relay race was done when I found you, so I may as well rest here for ten minutes. I am so stiff from riding that I wouldn't dare to lie down just now. I have got to

exercise my limbs considerable before I do that. It is a long ride to Fort Griffin and back."

"You bet it is! It would take a man three or four days to make the distance on one horse."

That would depend a great deal upon what kind of a horse he had. I could do it quicker with my sorrel."

"And you did it in twelve hours by changing horses five times!"

"Yes, and the last time I changed horses I took the one that had carried me over the first thirty miles of the distance."

"It don't seem possible. They say it is ninety miles from Fort Feather to Fort Griffin."

"Well, if it isn't quite that distance I consider that I did well," said Wild.

The boy was tired out, for it had been a severe strain on him to ride as he had since dawn.

But he would not give in.

He meant to see the finish.

He felt joyful to think that the fort had not been taken by the Utes, and he now was certain that the redskins would be put to rout in short order.

With the cavalrymen he had at his back he was positive that he could clean out the whole lot of them in double-quick time.

They waited a little more than ten minutes.

The sun was less than half an hour high now.

"Come on," Wild said; "we may as well get to the fort before the sun goes down."

"Had we better go there first?" the captain asked.

"Yes, I think so. It will be a good idea to find out just how matters stand before we attack the redskins. They will put up a fight, never fear. They won't try to get away. The chances are that they have lost heavily, and an Indian always wants revenge, you know."

"All right, just as you say, Young Wild West."

"The chances are that those you scattered just before I met you have reached the camp by this time, for I see nothing of them. They will let their friends know that the cavalry is coming, anyhow, so it would make little difference whether they saw us or not."

"We will start right away, then. Forward march!"

The troopers set out at a gallop at the word of command and away they went behind the timber strip.

Young Wild West's face was a little drawn from the fatigue he had undergone, but his eyes were as bright as ever.

He was ready to fight the redskins, and the thought that he had brought the cavalrymen in time made him feel as strong as ever.

The timber would shield them from view until they got within two miles of the fort, and then if the Utes took a notion to come out and try to head them off they were welcome to do it.

Wild had an idea that they would do this, for they would be apt to think that if the two forces of white men were joined it would go all the harder for them.

If they could defeat the cavalry in a quick engagement their chances would be good for taking the fort.

In a few minutes the troopers rode out into full view of those at the fort and the Indians in the grove.

Their bright uniforms and glittering trappings showed up finely in the rays of the sinking sun.

The tattered flag was still flying from the high staff at the fort, and as they headed straight for it the flag was dipped to welcome them.

Young Wild West waved his hat, for he knew someone must be looking through a field glass.

Then the flag was dipped again.

Our hero was elated.

The garrison had held out against the enemy and now the finish would soon be at hand.

The fight at Fort Feather would soon be over and victory would rest with the brave defenders.

The cavalrymen joined in a cheer when Young Wild West proposed it.

Their voices echoed over the prairie and reached the ears of the redskins.

When the troopers were half way from the timber to the fort nearly two hundred of the Utes came riding out to meet them.

They had barely got in range of the guns of the block house when one of the pieces spoke and a gap was cut in the ranks of the red demons.

"That was a pretty good shot!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "Now, captain, just get your men ready for some hot work. Those fellows seem to be pretty daring. They are full of the war spirit, I guess."

"They won't be so full of it when we get through," was the grim rejoinder.

Captain Darius was an experienced Indian fighter, and he got ready for business in a hurry.

Young Wild West rode at the left of the line, his Winchester rifle in his hands.

So well was his horse trained that he let the reins lie on his neck.

The Utes were spread out in fan-shape and coming toward them with their horses on a run.

The captain waited until the redskins had fired three volleys before he gave the command to fire.

Then a volley rang out, as only a volley fired by trained soldiers can.

Ponies were emptied right and left, but there were determined warriors to fill up the gap, and on they came.

In just two minutes it was over for the time.

The Indians could not stand the awful firing and they turned and fled for the shelter of the little grove.

With the ringing cheers of the cavalrymen sounding in their ears, they rode for their lives.

Young Wild West turned and rode straight for the fort.

Captain Darius gave the command and then his forces turned and followed the dashing young Prince of the Saddle.

Wild led them by a hundred yards when he reached the stockade gate.

His partners flew to meet him, and when he dismounted they hugged him with joy.

The women cried with joy and the children shouted.

But there were a man and woman there who were pale from fear.

They were Alfred Graves and his wife.

Their daughter was still held a prisoner by the Utes.

The Indians had not bothered the besieged party since the note from the girl was received, and they had been waiting anxiously.

Wild was quickly apprised of the facts.

"I will rescue the girl," he exclaimed; "but I want a little rubbing down first. Boys, I guess you will have to fix me up."

The last was said to his two partners, and they understood what was required of them.

They half carried the boy to a convenient spot and then they spent half an hour on him.

When they got through with him Wild called for a cup of coffee and something to eat.

Captain Darius was waiting to hold a consultation with him.

He had four scouts out watching the redskins, who were staying in the grove.

Darkness would soon be upon them, and they wanted to charge the redskins and have it over with while they could see to fight.

The bath and rubbing down that Wild had been subjected to made him feel like new, and he declared that he was ready as soon as he had finished eating his supper.

But the first thing he did was to look at his horse and make sure that he had been properly cared for.

"Well, Young Wild West, what are we going to do about it?" asked Captain Darius, as he came up, with Lieutenant Ainsworth.

"Well, captain, I think that the girl should be rescued before we make an attack on the redskins," was the reply.

"Then we will be unable to do it before dark?"

"Yes, it won't do to tackle them right now. They would probably kill the girl for satisfaction if we did."

"Do you think we can whip them easy after dark?"

"Yes, a few volleys and one charge will settle them. I wouldn't wonder if they have enough of it now."

Just then Cheyenne Charlie ran up to them and reported that a redskin was coming with a flag of truce.

"I will go out and meet him," said Wild.

He at once started for the break in the stockade, toward which the Ute was coming, a white handkerchief floating from the bayonet of a musket which he carried.

Young Wild West met him a hundred yards from the stockade.

It was now beginning to get dark, but the boy stood there in bold relief, as though he was simply waiting to greet a friend.

"Ugh!" said the Indian, as he paused before him.

"Ugh!" answered the young deadshot. "What is the trouble, redskin?"

"Me come to say that big chief Yellow Snake will kill and scalp the paleface maiden if the soldiers no let Utes go back to reservation in peace."

"Is that so? So the chief admits he is licked, then? All right. You go back and tell Yellow Snake that if he harms one hair in the paleface maiden's head not one of his braves will escape. We will kill them all. Tell him that Young Wild West says so."

"You Young Wild West?" asked the brave, looking at the boy keenly.

"Yes, that happens to be my name. I mean what I say, too. I have heard of Yellow Snake and Yellow Snake has heard of me. Go back and tell him what I say."

Without another word, the redskin turned and walked back toward the grove.

Wild stood there with folded arms, his rifle hanging over his shoulder.

He was going to wait for the messenger to come back, so he could learn what Yellow Snake thought about it.

In a few minutes the report of a rifle sounded and a bullet whizzed past the head of Wild.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "so they mean fight, do they? All right!"

He placed his rifle to his shoulder in a hurry and sent a bullet for the point where the smoke of the shot came from.

CHAPTER X.

WILD SAVES THE GIRL, BUT GETS CAUGHT HIMSELF.

Wild's bullet found the mark, for the death-yell of an Indian sounded.

The young deadshot had such excellent judgment that he could generally hit the man who fired a shot, so long as he could see the smoke that came from his rifle.

The bush behind which the marksman was crouching had not saved him.

Strange to say, no other shots were fired at the boy.

He walked back to the waiting cavalymen and reported to the captain what the messenger with the flag of truce had said, and what he had told him in reply.

"I guess they have weakened," said the captain. "Good. Now, Young Wild West, if you can only find a way to save the girl before we make the attack, everything will be all right."

"I can find a way, but we will have to wait until it gets good and dark."

"Well, we will leave it to you, then."

"What do you propose to do, Mr. West?" asked Graves, looking at the young deadshot hopefully.

"I propose to go to the camp of the redskins and get your daughter away from them," was the reply. "My partners will help, and that is all I will need."

The majority of those who heard him shook their heads, as though they had their doubts about his being able to do it.

But Wild acted as though he meant what he said, and he did mean it, too.

He was going to disguise himself as an Indian and try to save the girl.

It was getting dark rapidly now.

The cavalymen were being fed, and they would be in good shape.

As soon as it was really dark Wild went out to where some of the bodies of the slain Indians lay and proceeded to make a selection of the garments they wore.

It was a rather grewsome task, but he knew it was necessary, so he even cut off the long hair of one of the braves to help along the disguise.

Charlie and Jim helped him, and by the aid of some soft clay he made his face look like an Indian with the war paint on.

"I guess I will do now," he said, when he had finished with the disguise. "Now, boys, you go ahead and prepare the way for me. I will follow on behind, and if I once get to the trees over there I'll guarantee to do the work up right."

The three soon left the stockade, Charlie and Jim going a hundred feet ahead.

The two moved toward the grove cautiously, for they knew the redskins would be keeping a sharp watch in that direction.

Half way to it, they moved off to the right and Wild followed.

They were approaching the Indian camp from the upper side now, and if nothing happened they could make the distance in ten minutes as slowly as they were moving.

Things went along all right until they were within two hundred yards of the grove.

Then they suddenly came upon a brave, who was crouching in the tall grass.

But Charlie found him before the redskin knew of their presence, and with a bound he was upon him.

There was a short struggle, during which the Ute made no sound loud enough to be heard any distance, and then it was all over.

Charlie had caught him by the throat and choked off the cry that came to his lips.

The Indian had tried to stab him with his knife, so Charlie gave him a dose of his own medicine.

The two waited by the fallen redskin until Wild reached them.

"I reckon it's all right now, Wild," said Charlie. "I got that galoot jest in time."

"All right. Now you come with me to the edge of the trees. Jim, you go back and have a dozen of the cavalymen ready to ride out and drive back the redskins when I come with the girl. They haven't got more than two or three fires going down there in that hole they have dug, and I guess I'll be able to move about among them without being discovered."

Jim started back for the fort without a word.

He knew just what to do.

Wild and Charlie soon reached the edge of the trees.

They knew the way was clear in that direction, for the Indian who had been watching was dead.

They were now within a hundred feet of the camp.

A look at it showed them how the redskins had suffered from the fight.

There was nearly a hundred lying about badly wounded.

Those who had not suffered in this way were huddled together in groups.

Near a big fire sat Yellow Snake, the chief, smoking a long-stemmed pipe.

Guards were parading back and forth, and while the two crouched in the bushes, two of them passed within twenty feet of them outside the edge of the grove.

Wild looked around carefully, but could see nothing of the captive girl.

"I'll go and find her, Charlie," he whispered. "You stay right here. If I get caught you know what to do."

"All right," was the reply. "But I've jest got ther idea in my head that yer ain't goin' ter be catched. That rig you've got on will fool ther red galoots as sure as guns!"

Wild now began crawling around to the left.

He knew the girl was there somewhere, and he wanted to locate her before making the attempt to rescue her.

Wild could hear the redskins talking in low tones in their own language.

It was plain by their actions that they were sick of fighting, and even the chief had lost his war-like spirit.

When he had moved around twenty feet he came to a spot where he could look from and see the captive girl.

She had been untied from the log Big Tomahawk had bound her to and sat upon it, with the Indians scattered all around her, so there was no chance for her to run away.

Here and there a brave could be seen stalking about in a moody way.

Wild decided to be one of them for a time.

They were no doubt pondering over the defeat they had sustained, and no doubt wondering what would be done to them when they were finally captured by the paleface soldiers.

Wild got up, and, pulling the blanket around him, began walking with a slow tread back and forth.

He gradually neared the point where Agnes Graves sat, passing some of the warriors as he did so.

But they said nothing to him, nor he to them.

He was to all appearances a brave who desired to be left to his own reflections.

As soon as Wild saw that he attracted no attention whatever he felt easy.

He was glad that the girl was not tied, for it would make it all the easier for him to get her away.

The redskins had been considerate enough to leave her a big gray blanket to sit upon, and when the boy saw it he gave a nod of satisfaction.

Yellow Snake sat so he faced the captive, but he, too, was in a meditative mood, and he scarcely noticed her.

The boy changed his course a little and walked right close to the girl.

He was bold enough to walk right up close to the chief, too.

Then he turned and went back the same way.

This time he turned his eyes upon the captive, and when close to her he whispered:

"I am disguised as an Indian; I have come to save you. I am Young Wild West."

She gave a start as the words sounded in her ears, but she had presence of mind enough to keep her face turned the other way.

"Do just as I tell you and we'll both get away without the redskins knowing it," he said, and then he walked out of her hearing.

But he came back again in a minute or two, walking so close to one of the walking braves that their shoulders touched.

"Get up and put the blanket about you, as though you were cold," he resumed. "Then make out that you are going to sit down upon the ground that is covered with leaves. I hardly think they will interfere with you. I will make out that I think you are going to escape, and I will come and place my hand on your arm. If you see any of the rest coming toward you, break away from me and run in the direction I am looking. I will give chase, and then we will get away."

"I will do just as you say, Young Wild West," came from the girl, while she looked at the ground.

Wild walked slowly around behind where the chief was sitting, stalking so nearly like an Indian brave that he attracted not the least attention.

One of the redskins said something to him, but he shook his head and passed on into the gloom.

He was taking care not to get where the light from the fires could shine on his face.

He looked over where the girl was, and the next minute he saw her get up and place the blanket over her shoulders.

The redskins near her looked at her, but none of them offered to interfere with her.

To get away she would have to first get out of the circle.

She stepped upon the log she had been seated upon and undertook to clamber to the bank above.

Wild saw one of the Utes make a move to go to her, but he was too quick for him and got there first.

He seized the girl by the arm rather roughly and a slight scream came from her lips.

She failed to recognize him at first, though she had expected the identical move.

"Let go of me, you scoundrel!" she cried. "I am not going to run away. I want to sit down where it is not so damp."

"Ugh!" grunted Wild, and he let go her arm.

Then she clambered up the bank and he followed her.

"You had better sit down for a minute or two," he said in a whisper. "They will think it is all right if I am here with you."

Agnes acted on the suggestion.

At this juncture the chief got up.

He had been sitting there smoking long enough to make one more attack on the fort.

He probably knew he was in for it, anyhow, and if he could whip the whites it would be so much more to his credit.

He issued a call for the leading braves to assemble about the fire.

Wild knew something of importance was to take place, and he decided that now was the time for him to act.

"Get up and walk away while they are not looking," he whispered. "I guess we will never have a better time."

The girl was not a second in obeying.

She slipped off in the shadows and was gone.

Young Wild West walked slowly after her, but he forgot the part he was assuming, and a redskin near him came up and peered in his face.

His regular style of walking had given him away and he knew it.

But it was too late.

The brave said something to him and laid his hand on the boy's shoulder.

For an answer Wild hit him a stinging blow in the mouth and sent him staggering.

Then he darted away like a shot.

Wild overtook the girl just as Cheyenne Charlie loomed up before them.

"It is all right, Charlie," said the dashing young leader. "We have got to run for it!"

The redskins were running after them now.

Charlie took the hand of the girl and away they went in the direction of the fort.

Wild followed him, but unfortunately for him his toe caught upon a root and he fell heavily to the ground.

Before he could get upon his feet the redskin who had discovered that he was not one of them was upon him.

Then a hand-to-hand struggle ensued.

But before Wild could get away a dozen of the red demons were around him.

"They have got me, Charlie!" he cried out. "Fire a shot for help!"

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S FIGHT WITH THE CHIEF.

The words were scarcely out of Young Wild West's mouth when he heard a shot ring out.

Then the distant clatter of horses' hoofs came to his ears and he was overpowered.

The Utes did not seem to have any notion of killing the boy who had fooled them so neatly with the disguise he wore.

They wanted to take him alive.

The fact that he had been caught helped Charlie and Agnes Graves to get away, for very few of the redskins knew just why they were running that way, and when

they saw those who had caught Wild stop there, they took it for granted that he was the one they had been after.

A few, however, kept on after the scout.

As Wild was dragged back into the grove he heard a revolver cracking, and then he knew that Charlie was making himself known to the Utes who were after him.

Wild was dragged back to the light of the big fire the chief was near, and then the disguise was torn from him.

As he had put the Indian toggery on over his regular hunting suit, there was no mistaking who it was by any one who had ever seen him before.

The Indian who had brought the message under a flag of truce recognized him at once.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, turning to Yellow Snake; "Young Wild West!"

"Ugh!" grunted the chief, his eyes dancing with pleasure; "paleface boy heap much brave. Yellow Snake glad to meet him."

"I believe you when you say that, you old scoundrel," answered our hero, coolly. "There isn't the least doubt in my mind that you are glad to see me. Have you made up your mind to surrender yet? There are enough soldiers coming here now to eat you, so you had better save your life by surrendering."

"Young Wild West heap much fool!"

"You don't mean that when you say it, Yellow Snake. You know I am not a fool. I don't pretend to know everything, but what I am telling you is true."

"Paleface boy heap much lie. He will die, and his scalp will be worn in the belt of Yellow Snake."

"Well, maybe that's true. But I guess you won't wear my scalp long in your belt. I have got two partners who will soon make short work of you. If you don't let me go inside of five minutes you will be cleaned out."

The cavalry was approaching now, and the redskins could hear the thunder of hoofs, as well as Wild.

The majority of the Utes were lying close under the bank, waiting to put up a fight, but there were some, and Wild could not help noticing them, who acted as though they were ready to mount their ponies and ride away to save themselves.

A big change had been wrought in an hour or so, for, instead of being the attacking party, the Indians were now on the defensive.

Nearly the whole body of cavalymen under Captain Darius galloped up to within a hundred yards of the camp.

Then the voice of Cheyenne Charlie suddenly rang out.

"Listen, Injuns!" he yelled. "If yer don't let Young Wild West go inside of two minutes we'll ride down on yer an' cut yer ter pieces!"

Wild knew then that Charlie had got the girl safely to the fort.

He was delighted, even if he had been captured himself.

He knew that the redskins would not dare harm him now, for he could tell quite plainly that his words had impressed Yellow Snake.

The cavalymen did not fire upon the Indians.

They simply surrounded them and kept themselves partly concealed behind the trees.

They had dismounted, as Wild could tell.

The Utes crouched with their guns in their hands.

Some of them were close to their ponies, and our hero knew that these were but waiting for hostilities to begin, so they could mount and make a break for liberty.

The war-like spirit had left nearly half of them, and those who wanted to fight knew it would be hopeless for them.

Their scheme to gain possession of Fort Feather had failed disastrously.

Wild watched the expression of the chief's face.

It kept changing all the time, and finally he saw that fear was getting the best of him.

He decided that it was a time to make a play to gain his liberty.

"Yellow Snake," said he, "if you let me go I will see to it that you and your braves have a chance to lay down your arms and march out as prisoners. What do you say? There is no need of fighting any longer. You are whipped and you ought to know it."

"Paleface boy heap much talk," retorted the chief, angrily, and then he stepped up and slapped Wild on the forehead with the flat of his hand.

The boy's eyes flashed dangerously, but he could do nothing.

He was tied hand and foot.

"You wouldn't do that, and live long, if I was not tied, you contemptible hound!" he exclaimed.

Yellow Snake looked at him keenly.

"Young Wild West no fight Yellow Snake," he said.

"Let me loose and I will fight you any way you want to," answered Wild.

"Paleface boy can shoot heap much straight."

"Yes, and I can cut pretty straight with a knife, too."

"You fight Yellow Snake with knives?" queried the chief.

"Yes, or any other way."

"Good! You whip Yellow Snake and you go free; you no whip and you die!"

"All right; I am satisfied to that arrangement."

The chief picked up the knife that belonged to our hero. Then, without another word, he threw off his blanket and stepped over and cut the boy loose.

He dropped the knife at his feet, the point sticking in the ground.

Then he motioned for the braves to get back out of the way.

As the redskin leader drew his own keen-edged knife from his belt Wild picked up the one from the ground.

The dashing young Prince of the Saddle was right in his element now.

He did not fear the outcome, for he had bested every Indian he had ever met in a duel with bowies, and he was certain he could soon put this one out of business.

All eyes were turned on the two as they faced each other in the centre of the camp before the blazing fire.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart and the cavalrymen took advantage of this and crept up closer.

They now had the redskins virtually at their mercy.

The chief was a powerful fellow, nearly six feet tall, and he looked as though he could overcome the boy in a single rush.

But Young Wild West was as strong as the average athletic man, and his quickness and coolness was what counted in a fight of any kind.

"You had better sing your death-song, Yellow Snake," he said, tantalizingly. "I am going to send you to the Happy Hunting Grounds!"

"Ugh!" exclaimed the chief, and then he made a lunge at the boy.

But his knife blade simply cleft the empty air.

Wild knew the red scoundrel meant to kill him, as he would not be held for it on account of it being a fair and square fight.

He also knew that the chief deserved death many times, and he decided to finish him.

That would make the Utes surrender quicker than anything else, for with no chief to lead them they would soon disperse.

Wild met him squarely at the next stroke and the two blades came together with a ring.

The utmost silence was maintained by the lookers-on, for even the cavalrymen were thrilled by the sight.

There were some among them who feared that the daring boy would have to succumb to the powerful chief, but Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart did not think that way.

They knew what sort of stuff Young Wild West was made of, and they expected to see him down Yellow Snake just the very moment he felt like doing it.

Clash—clash!

The two blades came together again and the bodies of the two bent and swayed.

The chief had been the aggressor from the start, and Wild was backing around the fire and avoiding the fierce rushes.

But suddenly this all changed.

Young Wild West set at the Indian like a tornado, and he soon had him on the defensive.

"Fight, you red scoundrel!" he cried. "You slapped me in the face when I could not help myself; now go ahead and kill me, as you are so anxious to do. If you don't hurry and do it you will go down!"

"Ugh!" was all the reply the chief made.

He had found now that he was no match for the boy, but he hung on with a dogged tenacity.

He put on an extra effort and rushed forward.

This time his knife just grazed Wild's neck and gave him a scratch from which the blood came.

But that was all.

Before he could make another thrust Young Wild West dealt the blow that ended the fight.

It was a quick thrust to the heart.

Yellow Snake staggered back and began to sing his death-song.

Down he went, the words dying on his lips.

Wild folded his arms and stood stock still in his tracks.

At this juncture the voice of Captain Darius exclaimed:

"Surrender, you red fiends!"

Those of the redskins who had their ponies ready immediately mounted them and rode away, bending low to escape the bullets they knew would come.

A volley was fired at them before they had got twenty feet and many of them fell.

Those who felt like continuing the fight fired wildly in the direction the shots came from, but the rest threw down their arms and cried for quarter.

Wild leaped into the bushes and got behind a log, for he was liable to be hit by the bullets of his friends.

About half of the Utes made for their horses and many of them succeeded in making their escape in darkness.

One of these was a young chief called Red Moccasin.

He was really the most ambitious fighter of the lot, since the old chief went under at the hands of our hero.

He was known to the cavalrymen, too, and when they had gathered in the prisoners and placed them under guard the captain was not long in finding out who the leader of the escaping party was.

About eighty of them had got away, as near as they could judge.

"We will get them to-morrow," said Young Wild West. "The chances are that they will make straight for the reservation, thinking their chances will be better by surrendering when they get there. They don't want to surrender to us."

"Then you think it not necessary to pursue them to-night?" said the captain.

"No, everybody is tired out, and so are the horses. We will catch them to-morrow. Let us go back to the fort."

After the bodies of the dead Utes had been buried in the trench they had themselves dug to shield themselves from the three pieces at the fort, they all went over, taking the prisoners with them.

Agnes Graves led the women in a cheer when the victors rode inside the stockade.

Lieutenant Ainsworth, who had been left in charge, was at her side.

The lieutenant had been captivated by the charms of the young lady and the way she had acted during the whole siege had made him a strong admirer of her.

As Wild rode up and dismounted from one of the Indian ponies he had captured Lieutenant Ainsworth said:

"Well, I must thank you, Young Wild West, for managing to get Miss Graves away from the Utes. It is too bad that you were captured yourself, though."

"Well, as it has turned out all right, I think it was a good thing that I was captured. I fought the old chief a fair and square fight a little while ago, and I downed him."

As Wild said this he looked at the couple and smiled. He saw that something stronger than an ordinary friendship had sprung up between them.

Young Wild West slept as sound as a top that night.

He had won out in the relay race, and he was satisfied.

The next morning he was up and ready to give chase to the Indians that had escaped.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

It was not more than half an hour after sunrise when half the cavalymen left the fort under the lead of Young Wild West to hunt down the rest of the Indians.

Of course Charlie and Jim went along. They could hardly have been induced to stay behind.

Lieutenant Ainsworth was in command of the cavalry, and he was riding at the side of Wild.

"I received quite a little information from the Ute prisoners last night after you turned in," the lieutenant said to Wild. "This young chief, who led those who escaped, was really a rival with old Yellow Snake for leadership."

"Is that so? He must be a pretty foxy sort of a red-skin then."

"Well, I don't know about that part of it. He was one of those who did not believe in surrendering to us. He thought it better to die trying to get away than to be hanged, so one of the braves told me. He thought we would hang all the prisoners we took, I suppose."

"Probably he had that idea."

"The same brave who was telling me this said that Red Moccasin was no good, or he wouldn't have been whipped by you. He says he will soon settle you when he meets you on even terms."

"Ah!" exclaimed Wild; "so that is the way it is, eh? The young chief wants to meet me, eh? Probably he wants to have revenge for the slaying of Yellow Snake."

"I guess he don't want any revenge for that, for he now has a chance of taking Yellow Snake's place if he lives."

"Well, I am very glad to hear this. I will be on the lookout for Red Moccasin, as you call him. I guess it won't be hard to single him out when we come in sight of the redskins, for he will have his hair stuck full of eagle feathers, now that the old chief is dead."

"That is about the size of it."

"Well, when I find out that there is a person who is looking for a chance to fight me, I always want to give him the chance. Red Moccasin shall have a fair show at me. I never saw the redskin I was afraid to meet yet. I am only a boy, but I grew up fighting redskins, and I know their ways pretty well. Any man could whip an Indian in a fist fight, because they know nothing of that game. But with a knife he is a dangerous customer. As far as shooting with a revolver is concerned, few redskins are very accurate. They do damage at short range, of course, but when it comes to fifty yards or so, they are not much with a shooter, and it is more by chance than anything else if they hit what they shoot at. With a bow and

arrow they are all right, for they are taught archery as soon as they are big enough to bend a bow. It is the old savage instinct that is in them, and they can all send an arrow pretty true to the mark."

They were following the trail of the Indians now, and it struck Young Wild West that it was most likely they would stop at the first convenient place—or had stopped, rather, overnight.

This was found to be right, for in less than an hour they came to the place where the escaping Utes had remained over the night.

A fire was still smouldering, which told that they had not been gone very long, and that made our hero think that they would soon overtake them.

"We will have them by noon," he said. "How many men have you, lieutenant?"

"Not quite a hundred," was the reply.

"And there is supposed to be about that many Utes, you say?"

"According to what I learned from the prisoners."

"Well, we will be evened up all around, then. I am glad of that. I am going to give the young chief a chance to fight it out with me. If I whip him they are to throw down their arms and surrender, and if he gets the best of me they are to go on to the reservation undisturbed."

"Won't that be a rather dangerous thing to do, Young Wild West?" Ainsworth asked. "Suppose he should disarm you? He would have the best of you, and then we would have to let them go."

"Well, Red Moccasin won't disarm me, lieutenant. Don't let that worry you."

They rode on at a stiff pace the biggest part of the forenoon.

It was just about half an hour before noon when they sighted a moving body of horsemen approaching a strip of timber about two miles off to the left.

They instantly decided that they were the escaping Utes.

"They have turned sharply to the left to make the timber, which shows that they must have seen us," said Wild. "Now we can cut off a good half-mile by riding straight for the point they are making for. Come on, boys! We will soon settle this thing!"

The cavalymen spurred up their tired horses and they swooped toward the timber.

The Utes reached it first, and as soon as they got there they dismounted and lined up behind the trees.

"Looks as though they means ter fight," remarked the scout.

"Yes," retorted Jim.

But when they were less than a quarter of a mile from them a brave came riding from the woods, waving a flag of truce over his head.

Young Wild West led the cavalry right on.

The redskin halted about two hundred yards from the edge of the timber and waited.

Not until they had completely surrounded him did the cavalymen come to a halt.

"You talk to him," said the lieutenant, nodding to Wild.

"All right," was the reply, and then he rode up to the Indian horseman and said:

"What do you want?"

"Red Moccasin wants to fight Young Wild West on horseback, with his hunting knife."

"Good! Tell him to get ready to die when he starts in."

"Red Moccasin wants Young Wild West to give his promise that the Utes can go on back to the reservation if Young Wild West is killed."

"Good! That is the very thing I was going to propose."

"And if Young Wild West kills Red Moccasin the Utes will all ride back to the fort as prisoners of the paleface soldiers."

"That's right. Ride back and tell him that I give my word on that proposition."

As the brave turned and rode back Wild turned to the lieutenant and his partners and observed:

"Rather strange that the chief should make the proposition I thought of, isn't it?"

"It is strange," answered Ainsworth.

"Well, come on up and form your men in a double line. I will soon take care of Red Moccasin. I am going to fight just as though my life depended on it."

There was no delay in getting the duel started.

Red Moccasin rode out on a piebald pony that was decorated with brightly colored ribbons.

The redskin must have been sincere, for he only carried a knife with him.

He was stripped to the waist and his painted and greased body shone in the sun.

Wild tossed his hat to Jim and then rode forth to meet him.

Without a word, the young chief rode out and met Wild.

The two horses met, their necks crossed and then the two knives came together.

Sparks of fire sputtered from them and the ring of steel sounded.

Young Wild West realized that Red Moccasin was superior to the old chief in that line of business, so he determined to take no chances with him.

In less than ten seconds after they met he saw an opportunity to disarm him, and he made a thrust that did it nicely.

The knife went flying from Red Moccasin's hand and a yell of applause went up from the cavalymen.

The young chief promptly dismounted and stood with folded arms.

"Young Wild West heap much fight," said the chief, slowly, as he kept his eyes on the ground. "The Utes surrender."

Lieutenant Ainsworth at once gave the command to take the redskins' weapons from them.

They came forward one at a time and gave them up. Wild dismounted, and picking up the chief's knife handed it to him.

"Red Moccasin can keep this," he said.

Then it was that the treacherous nature of the Indian came to the surface.

He took the knife and made a move to put it in his belt, but instead of doing so he made a sudden thrust at the boy.

Wild jumped back just in time to escape the blow.

Crack!

Cheyenne Charlie fired and Red Moccasin dropped.

"That's what ther measly coyote wanted," said the scout. "Yer can't trust an Injun, an' never could. I knowed he wasn't satisfied, an' that he'd try ter fix Wild. That's why I kept my hand on my shooter."

The braves remained perfectly submissive, however.

They knew it would go hard with them if they revolted now, since they had surrendered.

Ten minutes later they were all riding toward the fort under guard.

The fort was reached before sunset.

The next day General Fortier reached the fort with his regiment.

The uprising of the Utes had been quelled almost as quickly as it began.

Young Wild West and his partners remained at Fort Feather for a few days, and then as their services were no longer required they set out for the place they had left the wife of the scout and the sweethearts of the two boys.

But before they went they learned from Lieutenant Ainsworth that pretty Agnes Graves had consented to be his wife, and that he was going over to Richfield in the fall to marry her.

"I want you and your partners to be at the wedding," he said. "I will give you due notice when it will take place."

"All right, lieutenant; I wish you luck, anyhow, whether we get to the wedding or not," answered Wild.

Then they rode away to the south and were soon lost in the distance.

THE END.

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